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THE WORD OF GOD IN THE WORD OF THE CHURCH

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Preaching today is a pressing problem—or perhaps it has always been a problem, and only today are we becoming aware of the true nature of the problem. Religious sociologists, analysing the causes of the dechristianization of France, fasten the heaviest responsibility upon the inadequacy of preaching: preaching which lacked both the realism and the force of the Gospel. Their research has placed its finger on a crisis: a lack of confidence in the Word of God as an instrument for the coming of the Kingdom.[1] The faithful are deceived and bored by it; the priests seem to be afraid of it or neglect it, and the question is heard: "Why preach? Nobody listens."

But if religious sociologists have made us aware of the urgency of the crisis, theologians today are looking in a new direction for its solution. Until recently, the institution of preaching has been taken for granted. Because it has been with the Church from the beginning, it was presumed that it corresponded to a need or necessity. But the only thing that men of the past have tried to do with it was to adapt it, to rejuvenate it, to make it more interesting or at least not too boring

[1]Yves-Bernard Tremel, "Serviteurs de la Parole," *Lumière et Vie* 9 (1960), 8.

for the hearer and not too onerous for the preacher. The crisis of preaching proves that this method has been unsatisfactory.[2] That preaching could be a theological problem in itself hardly occurred to anyone, and it is to be noted that in the great theological encyclopedias, such as the *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, not a single article was dedicated to "Preaching."

Today theologians have become aware that like the Church and the Sacraments, preaching is a true and proper *mysterium*; that it is not just another form of human rhetoric; that it has a unique and irreplaceable function in the economy of salvation willed by the Father, revealed in Christ and realized in the Church through the Spirit. Certainly, psychological and pedagogical insights as well as oratorical skills are of use and value. But "the crisis of preaching is a theological crisis" which "will not be resolved as long as we do not have a clear view concerning the place of the Word of God in the divine plan."[3] "We need above all a 'theology of preaching'."[4]

In order to make preaching the force it should be in the Church's life, theological reflection must clarify the nature and essence of preaching: its structure, value, efficacy, laws, content and criterion. It must spell out the role of the preacher, the principles of adaptation, the dispositions demanded of the hearers of the Word. H. Schlier insists that the crisis of preaching has not arisen primarily from external difficulties, nor from personal or methodical deficiencies, but above all from the fact that we are no longer conscious of what actually occurs in preaching, and in the "Word" that is proclaimed in the liturgical gatherings.[5] This is due to a lack of a theology of the Word alongside of and integrated with the theology of the Church

[2]Pierre Charles, "Réflexions sur la théologie du sermon," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 69 (1947), 581.

[3]Jérome Hamer, *La Revue Nouvelle* 29 (1959), 137-147.

[4]Paul Hitz, "Die Theologie der Predigt," *Anima* 10 (1955), 377.

[5]Heinrich Schlier, *Wort Gottes*, 2nd ed. (Wurzburg: Werkbund Verlag, 1962), 7.

and the Sacraments. It stems from the failure to give more than a notional assent to the truth that the Sacraments *and the Word* are the means God has entrusted to the Church for building up the Kingdom in Jesus Christ through the Spirit. Karl Rahner has complained: "Ah, to think that there is no theology of the Word! Why has no one, like an Ezechiel, attempted to gather together the limbs scattered upon the fields of philosophy and theology and—to speak the word of the spirit over them, in order that a living body might rise up?"[6]

Theologians have set to work on this necessary task, but in reality only a beginning has been made. Certainly, elements of a theology of preaching can be gleaned from the passing remarks and references made by the great mediaeval theologians.[7] But they must be "gleaned" and they call for complementation and development. This article is meant to be an introduction to contemporary theological reflection concerning the Word of God in the Church.

WHAT IS PREACHING?

Preaching is the public proclamation and communication of the Word of God by the consecrated and authorized minister of the Church for the purpose of assembling and preparing the people of God for the *parousia* of the Lord. This proclamation is not merely the communication of knowledge which can be known independently of the proclamation, nor is it merely theoretical moral instruction. Rather, it is the proclamation of the "Mystery" announced by Paul, the hidden salvific plan of God, whose execution and fulfillment occur in the very proclamation. The proclamation concerning the self-communication of God to man in Jesus Christ through the Spirit itself effects this self-communication of God. It accomplishes this in so far as the proclaimed word is the Word of God, God's dynamic Word which

[6]Karl Rahner, *Schriften zur Theologie* III (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1956), 349-350 (author's own translation).

[7]Cf. Augustine Rock, *Unless They Be Sent* (Dubuque: W.C. Brown, 1953).

effects what it announces.[8] To comprehend this, we must reflect on the meaning of "Word of God."

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In the Old Testament, the "Word of God" designates the act of God addressing Himself to men, the essential mode whereby God intervenes in the world. The "word" (*dabar*) for the Hebrew was not merely the spoken expression of a thought; it was a dynamic reality which contained the power of the speaker and effected his will. *Dabar* was applied to the spoken word and to the thing (action or reality) signified by the word. Its basic concept, therefore, is the word-thing, for the power of the word posits the reality that it signifies. Furthermore, because the speaker puts himself into the word, the word is an extension of his personality. The speaker reveals himself in his word and is encountered there.[9]

In the Old Testament, the spoken word, the written word, historical events, and natural phenomena are all called *dabar Jahwe*, for the same Word of God addressed men personally in historical events, in phenomena of nature, in the experience of the prophet and in the spoken and written words of the prophet. The revelatory-dynamic Word of God, therefore, came to Israel in revelation-events, which were the incarnation of God's saving Will for His people, and in revelation-words spoken by the prophets which unveil and interpret the revelation-events as the personal communication of God to the whole people. The revelation-event and the revelation-word are the two sides of the unique Word of God to men. The prophetic word is

[8]Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler, *Kleines Theologisches Wörterbuch* (Freiburg: Herder, 1961), 299; Viktor Schurr, "Predigt," in *Lexikon fur Theologie und Kirche* VIII (Freiburg: Herder, 1963), col. 714.

[9]John McKenzie, "The Word of God in the Old Testament," *Theological Studies* 21 (1960), 191, 200, 205.

based on the revelatory act of God in history, and the revelatory act of God in history culminates in the prophetic word; finally the prophetic word itself contains God's creative power which effects God's will in history. Thus the whole history of salvation, of which scripture is the witness, is the Word which God "speaks" to man.

This Word of God, precisely because it is Jahwe's Word and therefore, in the eyes of the Hebrews, a mode or extension of His being, is pregnant with an immense dynamism. For the Hebrew, the power or force of a word is the power or force of the person who speaks it. Because Jahwe's Word contains the power of Jahwe, it infallibly effects what it says and realizes the purpose for which Jahwe speaks it. "For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and returns not thither without having watered the earth and made it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my Word be that goes out of my mouth—it shall not return to me fruitless, without having done the thing that I pleased, and accomplishing the purpose for which I sent it" (Is. 55:10-11). This Word of Jahwe enters history with explosive power. It is itself living and creates life, just as it creates history and effects the realization of the Will of God that it announces.[10]

Thus the Word of God in the Old Testament is both noetic and dynamic. It reveals to man the saving will of Jahwe and it accomplishes the will of Jahwe that it reveals. "For the bible, therefore, the Word of God which is both an element of knowledge and an element of power creates on the one hand a relationship of truth, and on the other a current of energy between God and the world ... between Him who speaks and him who hears. This double aspect of the Word of God is found throughout the biblical revelation."[11]

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[10]Edward H. Schillebeeckx, "Parole et Sacrament," *Lumière et Vie* 9 (1960), 25-26 (all translations from this source are the author's own).

[11]J.-Ph. Ramseyer, "Word," in *A Companion to the Bible*, ed. Jean Jacques von Allmen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 461.

THE WORD OF GOD AS WORD OF CHRIST

The Old Testament conception of the Word of God as the dynamic reality in which the power of Jahwe is present, revealing His Person and effecting His Will, finds its perfect fulfillment in Jesus Christ, the Word of God in human form. In Him, God personally addresses man in human actions and human words. In His Person and saving actions, Jesus Christ is the revelation as reality and as event. But, as in the Old Testament, this revelation-event had to be illuminated by the spoken word in order that its full significance might be understood by all. Thus the words of Jesus, interpreting the significance of His Person and saving actions, are an essential element at the interior of the total revelation that is Christ.

Even from a human point of view, the human word is an essential element of the human spirit's incarnation and presence in the world,[12] for the human word is a mode of man's presence in the world as a person. "To come into the world is to begin to speak,"[13] and furthermore, as Ferdinand Ebner was among the first to realise,[14] the ultimate meaning of the word is the revelation of the "I" to the "Thou" in personal encounter. If then, for every man, the word is essential to the revelation of the human person, all the more will the human word be the principal means of revealing the Person of the Incarnate Word to the world. In the revelatory words of Christ, the revelation-reality of His Person will be unveiled, and the revelation-event of His saving actions will be completed. Thus, in the New Testament as well as in the Old, revelation as event and revelation as human word make up the two complementary sides of the one Word of God to man.

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[12]Schillebeeckx, "Parole et Sacrament," 29.

[13]Georges Gusdorf, *La Parole* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1953), 8 (author's own translation).

[14]Ferdinand Ebner, *Das Wort und die geistigen Realitäten* (Regensburg: Verlag Pustet, 1921), 43.

However, the spoken word of Christ must be examined more in detail. What is the nature of the spoken word of the incarnate Son; what is its power and dynamism? Here the analysis of human speech by K. Buehler can aid our understanding.[15]

Buehler distinguishes three elements in all human speech. Speech is first of all a communication of a content, a presentation of something to another in the form of a content of consciousness. Second, to speak is to address oneself to someone in order to provoke a response. It is, therefore, an interpellation, a call or appeal for a reaction in order that dialogue may develop. This invitation, like the reaction, can take many forms. It may only be an appeal for attention, or it could be a command calling for obedience, or a promise calling for trust; finally, and most important for our investigation, it could be witness or testimony calling for faith—the invitation to believe. Third, speech is the revelation of the person who speaks, the unveiling of his interior attitudes, the opening of his personal mystery.

The word of Jesus contains these elements in the highest degree. His word is the revelation of the mystery of His Person in the form of testimony, as an invitation to believe in Him. But this word calling for faith is not a merely human invitation to human faith, and therefore limited in its influence and efficacy. This invitation to believe is the incarnation of a divine invitation, which can penetrate to the very heart of our freedom and open it to His divine action. Christ's human word of witness to the Father can cause the response of faith because it is filled with the dynamism of the divine action and power. Saint Thomas calls this divine invitation the very essence of the light of faith—an interior impulse of God who invites by a strong attraction.[16] This is communicated to man in and through the human word of Christ, which is the incarnation of the grace inviting to faith. The word of Christ, therefore, was not merely the external proposition of the object of faith.

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[15]Karl Bühler, *Sprachtheorie* (Jena: G. Fischer, 1934), 28-33.

[16]*Summa Theologica*, IIa-IIae, Q. 2, a. 9, ad 3.

The human word of Christ was impregnated with the divine force and dynamism; it was the efficacious action and power of God manifesting itself in human form. Thus the word of Christ was a noetic *and dynamic* reality, the union of an exterior word and a divine impulse—the active presence of God in the human word. In 1 Jn. 2:18-28, the word of Christ, interiorly illuminated by the Holy Spirit, is the oil of anointing that the Christians have received in faith.[17] This is the "Word filled with power"[18] that has caused faith in the Christians, and which remains in them. Thus, Schillebeeckx is justified in concluding: "The invitation to faith as an interior aspect of the word of Christ is the inviting force of a divine grace in a human manifestation. In this sense, the word of Christ has as much sacramental value as his saving actions. The word is no less an act of salvation than the bodily contact that cured the sick. In the two cases, there was question of an efficacious act of God manifesting itself humanly."[19]

THE WORD OF GOD AS THE WORD OF THE CHURCH

This dynamic reality, the Word of God in the word of Christ, continued to resound in the world in the word of the apostles. Paul confidently informs the Corinthians that "God exhorts through us" (2 Cor. 5:20) and that "Christ speaks in me" (2 Cor. 13:3). Acts 4:29f. states that the apostles "spoke the Word of God with confidence." Paul congratulates the Thessalonians for having welcomed his preaching of the good news concerning Christ, "not as the word of men, but as it truly is, the Word of God" (1 Thess. 2:13). Schlier insists that these texts do not merely mean that God is the "cause" of the word, but

[17]I. de la Potterie, "L'onction du chrétien par la foi," *Biblica* 40 (1959), 30-47.

[18]Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* II (London: SCM Press, 1958), 59.

[19]Schillebeeckx, "Parole et Sacrament," 32.

that God is the one who speaks the word, the one whose word this word is.[20] In 1 Thess. 2:13, quoted above, just as the "word of men" means the word that men speak, so "word of God" means the word that God speaks. Schlier finds a confirmation of this in Rom. 10:14, where Paul says: "How are they to believe Him, whom they have not heard?" God Himself is heard in the preaching of the Gospel.

Similarly, when Paul speaks of the "word of the Lord" or the "word of Christ" (1 Thess. 1:8; 2 Thess. 3:1; Col. 3:16, etc.) the phrase means primarily the word which the Lord, or Christ, speaks. This is proven from Paul's explanation in Rom. 15:18: "I do not make bold to mention anything but what Christ has wrought through me to bring about the obedience of the Gentiles, by word and deed, with mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Holy Spirit." This is perhaps expressed even more clearly in 2 Cor. 13:3 where Paul speaks of "Christ who speaks in me, who is not weak in your regard, but right among you exhibits His power."

Paul's manner of speaking forces us to conclude that the Word of God and the word of the apostle, the word of the apostle and the Word of Christ coincide and mutually compenetrate in such a way that where the word of the apostle is heard, there is heard, at the same time, the Word of God or Christ. God and Christ speak in a human word, with it and under it, and man—the apostle—speaks the Word of God and the Word of Christ. The word of the apostle is the Word of God and the Word of Christ in the mouth of man.[21]

Both Paul and the Acts of the Apostles find the foundation for this incredible identification of the divine and human word in the mission which the risen Christ gave to the Twelve and Paul to be the witnesses of His resurrection, and in the communication of power and the Spirit for the fulfillment of this "service of the Word." Because they have been sent by Christ as "ministers of the Word" (Lk. 1:2; Acts 1:8, 6:2),

[20]Schlier, *Wort Gottes*, 10.

[21]Schlier, *Wort Gottes*, 13-14, 21.

and because they have received the power of the Spirit (Acts 1:8, 2:1f.), the apostles proclaim the Word "on behalf of Christ" and "acting as His ambassadors" (2 Cor. 5:20), not as though merely substituting for Christ who is absent, but with Christ present speaking in and through them (2 Cor. 5:20, 13:3). Christ is in them through His Spirit, for the Spirit is the revealing power of Christ Himself, the concrete vivifying and illuminating power of God revealing Himself in Christ. It is this Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, in whom God the Father reveals Himself in Jesus Christ, who empowers the human word of the apostle to be the Word of God and the Word of Christ.[22] "For I do not make bold to mention anything but what Christ has wrought through me ... in word and work ... *in the power of the Spirit*" (Rom. 15:18).

Because God in Christ through the Spirit speaks in the word of the apostle, the preached Word manifests itself as a living force and power. Through the preaching of the Good News, God calls for and causes the obedience of faith. In Eph. 1:13, Paul calls the preached Word "the Good News of your salvation," in view of the effect that it produces in the hearers. Schlier insists that these words do not mean the Good News which announces your salvation, as in Acts 13:26. Rather, they mean that it is the Gospel which has saved you, for as Paul explicitly stated in Rom. 1:16, "the preached Good News is a power of God for the salvation of those who believe."[23] Thus the Word of God in the word of the apostle is a dynamic reality which demands and causes faith, and by causing faith contains and gives peace (Eph. 6:15), works rebirth and gives a new life (1 Cor. 4:15).[24]

Here the question must be asked whether this dynamic presence of the Word of God in the word of the church ceased with the passing

[22]Schlier, *Wort Gottes*, 22-23.

[23]Heinrich Schlier, *Der Brief an die Epheser*, 2nd ed. (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1958), 69 (author's own translation).

[24]Gerhard Friedrich, "Euaggelizomai," in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* II, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1935), 717-718.

of the primitive church of the apostles. From a series of direct and indirect testimonies in the New Testament, the answer must be that the dynamic presence of the Word of God in the word of man continues to exist in the preaching of the church today.[25] Thus the word of the church, which is the personal Word of God in Christ *in forma ecclesiae*, in its ecclesial expression, also possesses an intrinsic efficacy. Like the Word of Christ, it is an external word that contains and incarnates the efficacious power of God. The analogy with the sacraments is clear. The revelation of God as revelation-reality and revelation-word remains present with men in the Church, the Sacrament of Christ. The revelation-reality is Christ, the self-communication of God to men, present to men in the sacraments. The revelation-word as the Word of Christ remains present to men in the word of the church—the ministry of the word. The sacraments of the church and the word of the church are a unity prolonging the total revelation of God to the world in Christ, and efficaciously causing that which they proclaim: the self-communication of God to men. The word of the church, therefore, is the ecclesial form of the Word of the God-man, and this is why the ministry of the word is intrinsically efficacious. Grace is not given merely on the occasion of the proclamation of the word, but by this proclamation itself.

EFFICACY OF THE WORD OF THE CHURCH

But how are we to describe this efficacy of the Word of God in the church, and what is its relation to the efficacy of the sacraments? On this subject Catholic theologians are by no means in agreement, for they are faced with a real difficulty. On the one hand, scripture appears to attribute to the Word of God proclaimed by man an efficacious power for salvation. On the other hand, the teaching authority of the church seems to attach the communication of divine grace and justification exclusively to the sacraments. The Council of Trent

[25]Schlier, *Wort Gottes*, 49ff.

taught that "through the sacraments all true justice either begins, or once begun, is increased, or when lost, is restored."[26] This difficulty cannot be overcome by making preaching an eighth sacrament, for even though preaching is a visible action which symbolizes an invisible action of God, even though it was established by Christ for the life of the church (Mt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 5:19), and even though scripture attributes to it an efficacious action, still Trent has formally decreed that there are no more and no less than seven sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Orders and Matrimony.[27]

Some, fearful of making preaching equivalent to an eighth sacrament, and following Bonaventure and Thomas, hold that preaching is merely an occasion and not a cause of grace and salvation. Certainly the positive contribution of this point of view must be maintained. The proclamation of the content of the Good News does exercise a moral influence on the spirit and will of man disposing and preparing him for God's communication of Himself in holiness and justification. But does this exhaust the meaning of the statements of the New Testament concerning the Word of God in the church? If it is true, as Schelkle and Schlier maintain,[28] that the expressions "Word of Life," "Word of grace," "Word of reconciliation," and "Word of salvation" do not only mean that the proclaimed word is a word *about* life, grace, reconciliation and salvation, but that the proclamation of the word communicates life, grace, reconciliation and salvation, this explanation does not do justice to the New Testament data. "The proclamation of the Word, which occurs 'in the Name', i.e., by the command and authority of Christ ... is the 'Logos of the Kyrios', the Word which the Lord transfigured by

[26]Heinrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum* (Barcinone: Herder, 1963) 843a (author's own translation).

[27]Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, 844.

[28]Karl Hermann Schelkle, "Das Wort in der Kirche," *Theologische Quartalschrift* 133 (1953), 282; Schlier, *Wort Gottes*, 41ff.

the Spirit himself speaks (Acts 8:25, 12:24, cf. 19:20). Yes, it is Christ Himself who appears and works in the Kerygma, as it were in word and in person (Acts 10:36-38, 20:32). Therefore it is truly God's Word (1 Thess. 2:13) and for those who believe and are saved, God's power (1 Cor. 1:18; Rom. 1:16)."[29]

Others suggest the compromise of calling preaching a sacramental, in order to show that preaching is not a sacrament, but like a sacrament. But as Davis has pointed out,[30] sacramentals are instituted by the church while preaching was instituted by Christ; sacramentals can be changed or abolished by the church while preaching remains an essential element in the economy of salvation and in the structure of the church; sacramentals derive their efficacy from the prayer of the church while the efficacy of preaching is due to the objective power of the word when mediated by a divinely appointed minister.

Haensli[31] would distinguish preaching from the sacraments by saying that the sacraments confer sanctifying grace, while preaching is the cause of actual graces which enlighten, stimulate to good, and help to carry out good resolutions. But, as we shall see, this classification is too broad if it means that preaching causes actual graces of all kinds, and too narrow if it is true that as a result of preaching it can happen that a person is justified without, and previous to, the reception of a sacrament.[32]

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[29]Viktor Warnach, "Wort und Sakrament im Aufbau der christlichen Existenz," in *Liturgie und Monchtum, Laacher Hefte* 20 (Freiburg: Maria Laach, 1957), 74 (author's own translation).

[30]Charles Davis, "The Theology of Preaching," in *The Study of Theology* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1962), 64-65.

[31]Ernst Haensli, "Verkundigung Heute aus lebendigen theologischen Einsichten," in *Fragen der Theologie Heute*, eds. Johannes Feiner, Josef Trütsch and Franz Böckle (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1957), 480.

[32]Karl Rahner, "Wort und Eucharistie," in Karl Rahner, *Schriften zur Theologie* IV (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1960), 333-334.

Haensli and others suggest a second distinguishing mark. The sacraments cause grace *ex opere operato*, i.e., the objective rite causes the union with Christ in grace independently of the understanding of the rite by the person who receives it. On the contrary, the causality of the preached word is dependent upon the hearer's understanding of the word in a meaningful and vital fashion; it therefore works *ex opere operantis*. Certainly this distinction contains an element of truth, but it does not seem adequate to distinguish the causality of the Word and the sacraments. First, as Rahner notes,[33] the phrase *ex opere operato* is not particularly illuminating. Second, since neither the merits of the preacher nor the merits of the hearer give preaching its divine power, we would be justified in attributing a certain *ex opere operato* efficacy even to preaching. Third, according to the Council of Trent, the *ex opere operato* efficacy of the sacraments is also conditioned by the preparation and cooperation of the recipients.

Consequently, Schmaus[34] is content to say merely that preaching is a communication of salvation, a mediation of the powers of grace, which partakes of the efficacy of the sacraments, but which may not be equated with the saving power of the sacraments, and which works in a different way than the sacraments. The latter work on the basis of the placing of a sign. In the sacramental sign, Christ is present and acting in a hidden manner, so that the union between human action and divine action is extraordinarily close. In preaching, Christ works through the word, but not in such a close union of the word of the church and Christ as there is in the sacrament. Schmaus feels that we are not able to describe the efficacy of the Spirit in the word precisely, but that the two extremes must be avoided: on the one hand to see in the word of the church an empty word, or a word with a merely natural, emotional power; on the other hand to understand the salvific efficacy of the church's proclamation of the word as a sacramental process. The union between Christ and the word of the church is more loose than

[33]Rahner, "Wort und Eucharistie," 334.

[34]Michael Schmaus, *Katholische Dogmatik* III (Munich: Hueber, 1958), 786f., 797.

in the sacraments, yet the word of the church is not an empty word which God uses merely as an occasion of giving grace. A heavenly force coming from God is active in the preached word. The natural word and its power is the instrument and container of a divine power. In the words of Söhngen, "preaching is witness that makes present that to which it witnesses. Christian preaching is ... witness of the Christ who ... bears witness to himself through his word."[35]

One may question whether this explanation advances our understanding of the data of scripture, but at least it remains faithful to that data. However, the distinction between sacraments and preaching as Christ working in a sign and Christ working through a word is neither adequate nor unequivocal, for despite the difference between word and sign, this difference is not so great that one could not understand the sign as a word and the word as a sign. But even more decisive is the fact that both sacraments and preaching actually contain both word and sign. Finally, Semmelroth has very convincingly explained preaching as the salvific sign which symbolizes the preaching of God Himself, the incarnation of His Son as the Word of God to man.[36]

Schillebeeckx has attempted to explain the problem of the efficacy of the word of the church in a more precise manner.[37] He begins with the objection of some that if we ascribe an internal efficacy to the preaching of the word, we place it on the same footing as the efficacy of the sacraments. Would not the preaching of the church then became an eighth sacrament, contrary to the teaching of the Council of Trent? Many theologians stumble over this objection and for this reason minimize the power of the ministry of the word. Schillebeeckx discovers the source of their error in a misunderstanding

[35]Gottlieb Sohngen, *Symbol und Wirklichkeit im Kultmysterium* (Bonn: P. Hanstein, 1937), 23 (author's own translation); quoted by Schmaus, *Katholische Dogmatik* III, 795.

[36]Otto Semmelroth, *Wirkendes Wort* (Frankfurt am Main: Knecht, 1962), 123, 223ff.

[37]Schillebeeckx, "Parole et Sacrament," 34ff.

of the sacramental structure of the *entire* church, which is, in its totality, grace become visible, because it is the prolongation of the presence of Christ on earth, and therefore the continued presence of God's self-communication in Christ. The church, therefore, in its entire structure is a great sacrament composed of numerous circles of sacramentality of varying intensity and concentration, all radiating from a center where the sacramentality is concentrated in its most intense form. This center is the Eucharist, the focus of the real and active presence of Christ among us. Around this center there is a first circle of radiation: the six sacraments. Outside this circle, the sacramentality of the church diffuses itself in all the activities of the church and of Christian life: preaching, teaching, working, praying, loving the brethren, consoling, exhorting, all forms of living the life of grace. In all these ways, grace becomes visible as an active force attracting men. This same sacramentality of the church radiates even further, but with less power, first in the sacramentals, then further in the reality of the human material and historical world, since nothing in this world escapes the influence and action of Christ the Lord and the incarnation.

In this entire system of circles in which the radiating sacramentality of the church diffuses itself, visible earthly realities are used by the living Lord with a great variety of concentration and efficacy to mediate the grace of God to men. This means that the grace of Christ does not only reach us and affect us interiorly. Grace comes to us visibly in all sorts of incarnations. This is a consequence of the Incarnation. Through the Incarnation of the Son of God, the entire world of man has been drawn into the encounter between God and man. The created world itself can now become a vehicle for the self-communication of God, a visible incarnation of an invisible grace. Among all the possible forms of this sensible manifestation of the Lord in and through the entire created world, the sacraments of the church and the Word of the church are the points of most brilliant light and of greatest efficacy.

Now the "Word" is the church itself in one of its essential activities—the communication of the Word of Christ. It is an essential form of the sacramental structure of the church. The Word, as well

as the sacrament, is a personal action of the living Lord present in the church. The peculiar efficacy of these two actions of Christ will be determined by the peculiar nature of the word and the peculiar nature of the sacraments, just as the mode of Christ's presence in the word and in the sacraments will differ according to the signification proper to the word and the sacraments.

Here is where the modern phenomenology of the word, as confirmed by the study of the word in the Old Testament, can help to clearer understanding. Both of these sources bring us to understand that the word cannot be separated from the person who speaks the word. The word is never something absolute in itself. It always connotes the person who speaks it. As we saw before, the word is a mode of being of the person who expresses himself in the word.

Now the word of Christ is a word of witness or testimony, and testimony is a word calling for faith. There is question here of the presence of Christ Himself as witness to the Father, as inviting men to faith in the Father and His saving will. The peculiar efficacy, therefore, of this dynamic word of Christ which can penetrate to the heart of man's freedom will be to cause the obedience of faith. Christ will be present in His word, in an active manner, according to the mode of a word that invites to faith. This invitation is a divine invitation, therefore, which gives the power and force to freely respond to the invitation in faith.

Thus the preaching of the church possesses an internal efficacy, but an internal efficacy which is completely different from the efficacy of the ritual sacrament, because it is an efficacy after the manner of a word of witness inviting to faith. The ritual sacrament *supposes* this faith, and possesses the efficacy which causes justice and sanctification.

The intrinsic efficacy of the word of the church is the very power of the person who speaks in and through this word: the power of Christ. This power of Christ, inviting and causing us to believe, is carried and contained in the word of the church. Certainly this intrinsic efficacy of the word of the church, this *dunamis* of Christ present in the word inviting to and effecting faith, is present in the various forms of the

church's preaching with varying degrees of intensity. But that does not alter the truth of the statement that the word of the church possesses an intrinsic efficacy from Christ to cause faith.

The relationship of preaching to the sacraments, the internal bond between the word and the sacraments, should now be apparent. The obedience of faith is the presupposition for every faithful reception of the sacrament—by its nature, a sacrament of faith. Without the efficacy of the word to cause faith, there would be no real efficacy of the sacrament. Thus the ministry of the word is essentially ordered to the ministry of the sacrament. Faith is the root and beginning of the salvation which is given to us fully in the sacrament. Faith, aroused and affirmed and deepened through the ministry of the word, is the vital atmosphere for the reception of the sacraments. That is the reason why Christ has confided to one unique ministry both the word and the sacrament. That is why the very structure of the Mass includes both the word and the sacrament.

Note that the ministry of the word does not merely cause faith in unbelievers. It also vitalizes, renews, reawakens, inflames and deepens the faith of believers. The life of faith is a life of constant conversion that has never been completed fully once and for all, for faith remains the faith of a sinner, to whom the very movement of life opens up daily new perspectives, new experiences, new temptations, and inundates his interior life with new elements to be christianized, or uncovers old habitudes that have never been christianized. Christian life in faith is a continual, gradual and painful movement to incarnate in the unity of the person the Christian vision of the world and the Christian attitude toward the world in the entirety of one's life. Christian preaching is the necessary cause of this relentlessly deepening and increasingly comprehensive surrender to the only Lord in faith.[38]

[38]René Girault, "La prédication est mystère," *La Maison Dieu* 39 (1954), 11-12. Among the other theologians (Davis, Rahner, etc.) who attribute to preaching a causal efficacy for salvation, Otto Semmelroth deserves a special mention because of his original explanation of that efficacy. According to Semmelroth,

Consequently, preaching is not *primarily* intended for the communication of unknown information concerning the faith, nor for instruction concerning what is already known because repetition is *mater studiorum.* Rather, the repeated proclamation of the word places the hearer in vital contact with the living Lord, who through this

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preaching does not merely cause faith, the beginning and root of all justification, but it communicates the grace of justification itself. He explains that this does not contradict the teaching of Trent because Trent did not say that all justice comes through the sacraments *alone.* Rather, preaching *and* the sacraments, as two poles in a structure of dialogue, are the unified ecclesial source of all justice and grace.

The basis for this explanation is the bi-polar mode in which the redemption was effected. The Father spoke His Word to man in the Incarnation, and Christ responded to the Father in the obedience which terminated on the cross. Thus the redemption was not effected solely by the sacrifice of the cross (tendency in the West after Anselm), nor solely by the Incarnation (tendency of some Eastern Fathers), but by the Incarnation and the sacrifice of the Cross in the bi-polar structure of dialogue as a unified compound cause.

But the church is the sign and symbol of God's self-communication to man in Christ, making present and active that which it signifies. As such its structure imitates and symbolizes the bi-polar structure of the redemptive event: Word-Answer, Incarnation-Cross. Preaching is the efficacious symbolic re-presentation of the Incarnation as the Word of God to man. The sacraments, each in their own way, are the efficacious symbolic re-presentation of the sacrifice of the Cross. As efficacious symbolic re-presentations of the Christ-event (Incarnation-Cross) that effected redemption, the preaching of the Word and the Sacraments are a unified total reality, just as the original reality they signify is a total-reality composed of two events in the structure of dialogue.

The preaching of the Word as the re-presentation of the Incarnation communicates no grace proper to itself *alone*, just as the sacramental re-presentation of the sacrifice of Christ (in all the sacraments) does not communicate a grace different from that given in the preaching of the Word. Rather, the ecclesial source from which the grace of God and justification of the individual member of the church flows is the preaching of the Word and the sacraments as *zweieinheitliche Gesamtquelle:* as a bi-polar total source. Cf. Semmelroth, *Wirkendes Wort,* 217-240.

encounter in the proclaimed word deepens and renews the personal surrender of faith.

CONCLUSION

What has been written has been proposed as an introduction to the theology of preaching from the point of view of preaching's divine efficacy. What has been said calls for complementation and completion from the point of view of the human subject of preaching, the content of preaching, the source of the content of preaching, viz., the Bible, the hearer of preaching, etc. Though it is impossible to treat of these elements in the present article, a final point will be noted concerning the human subject of preaching and the extent to which he influences and affects the efficacy of preaching. Here there is a marked difference between preaching and the sacraments, for unlike the sacraments, the efficacy of preaching can be blunted by the personal unfitness of the preacher. The preacher must personally construct his sermon and thereby the sign, the human word which causes grace, while the sign of the sacrament, and all that is necessary for its valid bestowal, is already exactly determined for the minister of the sacrament. How far the word of the preacher effectively communicates the Word of God depends on the preacher's diligence, learning, assimilation of the Word of God in scripture, and holiness. The preacher's activity, therefore, determines whether his word mirrors the Word of God fully, imperfectly, or not at all. The interior grace communicated in preaching illuminates the word which is outwardly presented. The attraction to faith is mediated in and through the sign. A defect in this sign limits the efficacy of the grace.[39]

Yet the fact remains that the proclamation of the Word of God is a direct cause of grace, divinely established to mediate the Father's Word in Christ to men of all times, and to effect and deepen faith as man's response to that Word of God. The essential efficacy and power of

[39]Davis, "The Theology of Preaching," 62-63.

the Word of God in the word of the church comes not from human learning and eloquence, but from the action of God in Christ through the power of His Spirit. The faithfulness and insight with which the preacher conveys the Word of God conditions the clarity with which his word reflects the Word of God. But when the sign, the preacher's word, faithfully reflects God's Word, the efficacy for calling forth the response of faith comes not from the human contribution, but from the power of Christ present in and under the human words inviting to faith. "For the proclaimed Good News is God's power for the salvation of everyone who believes" (Rom. 1:16).

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EMIL BRUNNER'S THEOLOGY OF REVELATION

Joseph J. Smith, S.J.

Emil Brunner's life-long preoccupation[1] with the theology of revelation resulted from what he considered to be a twofold deformation of the biblical concept of revelation:

[1]Revelation was a partner-theme with faith in Brunner's first two works of protest against the theology of the nineteenth century: *Erlebnis, Erkenntnis und Glaube* (1921) and *Die Mystik und das Wort* (1924). Again in 1925, revelation was the theme of a small work, *Philosophie und Offenbarung.* In *Der Mittler* (1927), revelation dominates almost every page, for one of its main aims is to show that the Person of Christ *is* the unique revelation. In the same year appeared the *Religionsphilosophie evangelischer Theologie*, which is a confrontation of the Christian concept of revelation with Rationalism, Subjectivism, Historicism and Orthodoxy. The works *Gott und Mensch* (1930), "Die Frage nach dem 'Anknüpfungspunkt' als Problem der Theologie," *Zwischen den Zeiten* 10 (1932), "Gesetz und Offenbarung," *Theologische Blätter* 4 (1925), "Die andere Aufgabe der Theologie," *Zwischen den Zeiten* 7 (1929), and finally the work in which they all culminated, *Der Mensch im Widerspruch* (1937), are all, in whole or in part, attempts to expose and develop a Christian anthropology, and thus be able to define the relation between the natural man and the revelation in the Word of God, i.e., *der Anknüpfungspunkt* for God's revelation. Brunner's answer to Karl Barth in *Natur und Gnade* (1934) was a clarification of his views on natural revelation. His short work, *Vom Werk des heiligen Geistes* (1935), indicates how the "once-and-for-all" historical revelation in Jesus Christ is made present to all generations, or in Kierkegaard's terminology,

(1) a deformation by Protestant liberal theology that compromised its uniqueness and transcendence; (2) a petrification by the orthodox theology of Protestantism and Catholicism which transformed revelation from a living encounter into an object, either the Bible or a deposit of propositional truths. Against the first deformation, Brunner insists that the biblical conception of revelation is absolutely unique and differs radically from that of non-biblical religions. Against the second, he underlines the personal nature of the Christian revelation as event, and the impossibility of expressing its full meaning in an abstract definition independently of its manifold and concrete forms.

THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF REVELATION

Despite his insistence that the biblical concept of revelation is totally different from that of non-biblical religions, Brunner willingly admits that both notions contain certain elements in common. This is the reason why the same word can be used for both, for revelation is always and everywhere "a process, by means of which something previously closed to man is opened up; through which something mysterious is made known in a mysterious manner. It is always knowledge which comes from outside the formal sphere of knowledge, and which man cannot gain by himself but which is given to him, which unexpectedly and suddenly has meaning in his life, either for salvation or for damnation."[2]

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how all men are made *gleichzeitig*, contemporaneous with the revelation in Christ. The six conferences that appeared in 1938 under the title *Wahrheit als Begegnung* are an attempt to illustrate, in the personalistic categories of Ebner and Buber, the significance for Christian theology of the biblical concept of truth as the event that occurs when man in faith meets God in His revelation. In 1941 appeared *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, dedicated entirely to exploring the Christian concept of revelation. Finally, his views have received clarification on many points in the three volumes of the *Dogmatik* (1946, 1950, 1960).

[2]Emil Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft* (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1941), 24 (all translations from this source are the author's own).

Thus Brunner enumerates six elements which are always to be found in the general notion of revelation:

1. The negative presupposition that something is hidden from man, that man is somehow in darkness, cut off from what is to be revealed.
2. The mysterious manifestation of something formerly hidden.
3. The communication of a very special and extraordinary kind of knowledge; the opening up of a new dimension of knowledge.
4. The significance of this knowledge for man's life.
5. The unexpected nature of the new knowledge which can only be the result of an unawaited gift.
6. The supernatural character of the event as an abrupt "intrusion from another dimension," which distinguishes it from the ordinary course of events.[3]

These six elements are also contained in the biblical understanding of revelation. But Brunner points out that here they receive an entirely new meaning, because here and here alone are they understood absolutely and personally; here and here alone do they receive a double qualification which makes them personally absolute and absolutely personal.[4] In the biblical revelation, therefore, even the common elements are understood in a radical and unique fashion which has a parallel nowhere else. Only biblical revelation possesses this radical meaning, because only biblical revelation means God manifesting himself as a Thou, as a Subject, in dialogue with man through prophetic word and historical event. "Everywhere else God is understood as being either not absolute or not personal."[5]

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[3]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 24-32; Emil Brunner, "Theologie und Kirche," *Zwischen den Zeiten* 8 (1930), 398.

[4]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 24.

[5]Emil Brunner, "Theologie und Ontologie," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 12 (1931), 116 (author's own translation).

Consequently the six elements common to all revelation are transformed in biblical revelation in the following manner:

1. In biblical revelation, the negative presupposition of man's isolation in darkness becomes the absolute and personal darkness of sin. This darkness does not merely affect man's knowledge, but his entire being. Man is not merely in darkness, but his darkness is self-made. He himself has turned off the light.
2. The mysterious manifestation of that which was hidden is radically transformed by the fact that the biblical revelation is the absolute and personal manifestation of the personal and absolute Mystery, the Lord God, who can only be known by self-revelation.
3. The knowledge communicated in the biblical revelation is so radically different from what men ordinarily call knowledge that Brunner hesitates to call it knowledge. a) It is not the knowledge of "something" over which I have become lord, but the knowledge of an Absolute Person who communicates himself as man's Lord. b) It does not merely enrich me with a new content of knowledge, but it transforms my whole being. c) It does not leave me alone with the object of my knowledge, but creates communion with God and my neighbour.
4. Biblical revelation does not merely give a knowledge which is significant for life. It brings Life itself. The darkness which revelation dispels is sin and death and corruption. The light it brings is salvation and life, communion with God and participation in his own life.
5. The biblical revelation is absolutely unexpected. It is the absolute paradox, for it is the revelation of that which ought not to be expected because it is contrary to all rational human expectation: God's forgiving love for a rebellious and unloving creature.
6. Finally, the biblical revelation differs totally from all other revelation by its radical *Einmaligkeit*, its absolute uniqueness. The revelation of God in Jesus Christ is the absolutely

> unique event that has taken place once and for all, and that, by its very nature, cannot and need not be repeated. All the other forms of biblical revelation are either foreshadowings or reflections of the absolutely unique event which is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, whose central point is the atoning death of God's Son on the cross. The entire process of biblical revelation in all its forms shares in the *Einmaligkeit* of this central event, according to varying degrees.[6]

A final observation that Brunner makes concerning the biblical understanding of revelation explicitates the subjective aspect of this revelation. Revelation in the Bible is not merely an objective event, independent of the subjective reception of it by man for whom it is intended. Revelation in its full and proper sense includes a subjective illumination which makes possible a personal reception of the objective communication. Of course, Brunner does not prohibit the use of the word "revelation" to designate the objective event, considered independently of the subjective revelation. But when this is done it must also be remembered that this is an improper way of speaking. The full biblical understanding of revelation is a unity composed of objective forms and their subjective reception. Brunner finds that this subjective side of revelation, i.e., the subjective reception of the objective revelation, is designated in the New Testament by the word *pistis*, faith. Therefore, to fully understand what the revelation in Jesus Christ means, we must also understand what faith is.[7]

THE FORMS OF THE BIBLICAL REVELATION

As has already been noted, Brunner maintains that the biblical

[6]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 24-33; idem, "Theologie und Kirche," 399-401.

[7]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 33-34; Emil Brunner, *Dogmatik* I (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1946), 23 (all translations from this source are the author's own).

revelation cannot be adequately expressed in an abstract definition. It can only be comprehended by studying its concrete forms. Only by viewing the characteristic diversity of these many forms in their relation to one another can we fully know the nature and unity of biblical revelation. The original revelation in creation, the historical revelations in the Old and New Dispensations, the revelation as witness to the revelation in Christ through the Bible, through the Church, and through the Holy Spirit, and finally the revelation in glory, these are the forms of the revelation that must be studied in order to comprehend the rich reality which is the biblical revelation.

1. The original revelation in creation. The first form of the revelation was the revelation given in creation, the original revelation. This revelation is present to all men in two forms: the created world as the manifestation of divine omnipotence and wisdom, and man created according to God's image. It was the insistence of Brunner on the reality of such a revelation which occasioned his break with Barth between 1934 and 1935. Brunner had always taught that there is an objective revelation of God in the created world and in man created in God's image. But at the same time he has always denied that man can obtain a valid and genuine subjective knowledge of this objective revelation apart from the historical revelation in Christ.

Brunner's explanation of the necessity of admitting this original revelation begins with the fact that God's historical revelation in the prophets and in Christ does not come to man who is without knowledge of God of any sort whatever. It comes to men who are sinners, and therefore, concludes Brunner, to men who know God but who have turned away from him. It does not come to ignorant and guiltless man, but to guilty and therefore knowing man. The fundamental statement that both Testaments make about the "natural" man, i.e., the man who has not yet been touched by the Word of God, and reborn through it, is that he is a sinner. But in saying that, the Bible is telling us that the natural man, both heathen and atheist, exists in a negative relation to God. Sin in the Bible is always a negative relation to God, a turning away from the Creator. But this in turn implies and presupposes that man originally possessed a positive relation to God which he denied and repudiated. It implies, therefore, an original revelation. To deny

this would lead to a denial of sin, or to the distortion of its meaning as a free, responsible act of repudiation, and to deny sin in this sense would be to deny the Christian significance of the unique revelation in the Person of Jesus Christ. But above all, argues Brunner, it is impossible to deny the reality of the objective original revelation so clearly attested by Saint Paul in the Epistle to the Romans and by the entire Christian tradition.

Yet despite this objective revelation of God in creation, despite man's possession of an intellect bestowed precisely that he might recognize God as manifested in the works of creation, man does not and cannot truly know God from this objective revelation. Man possesses no true and valid natural knowledge of God because he has deformed the original revelation by his sin. In fact, man's sin consists precisely in this, that he suppresses the knowledge of God that arises in him through God's original revelation, so that the revelation God has given him for a true knowledge of himself becomes for man the origin of his idolatry. The only effect of the primitive revelation is to place man continually before God, although he cannot perceive God as he really is. Man could not be a sinner if he did not know God in some deformed way from the original revelation, but because he is a sinner, and in so far as he, as a sinner, remains in self-isolation, man cannot know God correctly. His knowledge is as perverted as his heart. Thus the original revelation makes man responsible for his sin, but it has no meaning for man's salvation. Sin has made man blind to that which is visibly set before his eyes. This is the dialectical teaching that Brunner finds in Saint Paul's letter to the Romans (Rom. 1:18-21). Precisely because men do not want to recognize God who has manifested himself so clearly, Paul teaches that men are without excuse.[8]

Now, in fact, only the believer in Jesus Christ, with the guidance of Scripture, can see in creation the true God and not idols. The only

[8]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 53-78; idem, *Dogmatik* I, 19-20; Emil Brunner, *Natur und Gnade* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1935), 12-14, 46 (all translations from this source are the author's own).

revelation which saves man from his sin and opens for him the path to God is the historical revelation of the Old and New Testaments. According to the teaching of Brunner, these two forms of the revelation constitute a unity in diversity. The revelation of the Old Testament is necessary for the understanding of the New Testament revelation in Christ. It is the same Word of God that reveals himself in different ways in the Old and New Testaments, and the two economies of revelation are related to each other in the same way that what is preparatory is related to what is definitive, or as prophecy is related to fulfillment. For this reason Brunner affirms, in opposition to Bultmann, that without the Old Testament revelation the Word of God of the New Testament is unintelligible.

2. The historical revelation of the Old Testament. In the revelation of the Old Testament, history and historical events take on decisive importance, for here the Word of God has entered history. This is not to be understood in the sense of the liberal theologians who taught that God manifests himself always and everywhere in history. Brunner means that the God of the Old Testament, who elsewhere does not manifest himself in history at all, does reveal himself at special points in history, in a chain of particular events, where the prophetic word and the act of God are fused into an indissoluble unity. The prophetic word is based on the revelatory act of God, and the revelatory act of God in history culminates in the prophetic word. Finally, the prophetic word possesses a creative power which produces and determines historical events, for the Word of God is itself an event, an in-breaking from the other side, a marvellous coming which is not in man's power and control.

At the same time, according to Brunner, the prophetic word occupies a special place in the revelation of the Old Testament, for even in his actions in history, God wishes to tell us "something," and it is only in an articulated and intelligible word that the act of God attains its perfection as divine revelation. Furthermore, since the prophetic word is always the self-manifestation of the God who comes and who is advancing towards a goal, it is always messianic, even when it does not expressly announce the final Messianic Kingdom, for it is always a

"coming," a presence, a revelatory movement of God, coming to man in and through the prophetic word and the historical event, revealing the sovereignty and the love of God, and establishing the Kingdom of God in community with him.[9]

Nevertheless, this revelation was incomplete, for the Word of God was not present in person. In the Old Testament revelation, Word and event were still distinct. Though the prophetic word designates a Person and makes him known, it does not make him present in person.

3. The historical revelation in Christ. This complete and perfect revelation took place in the historical revelation in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is *the* revelation, the totality of revelation, for in him the Word of God is personally present, revealing the Father. Jesus Christ is not a mere genius with a wholly original thought, nor a messenger bearing to men a general truth of reason, as the liberal theologians would portray him. He is not merely a very original teacher, nor merely a perfect model and exemplar of what he taught. He is the perfect and complete revelation because he is himself divine. He alone stands on the other side of the boundary beyond which only God can stand, and today, in opposition to Bultmann, Brunner continues to insist that that which alone makes Jesus Christ the perfect revelation of God is his divinity, his identical nature with the Father, the fact that he himself is "from above," from true transcendence, who "came" and became man.[10]

Like all the theologians who originally formed the so-called dialectical theology school, Brunner was at first mainly preoccupied with safeguarding the transcendence of this revelation in Christ from all historical pantheism. In this early reaction to historicism which he saw ascribing a revelatory character to history as such, Brunner

[9]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 82ff.; Emil Brunner, *Das Ewige als Zukunft und Gegenwart* (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1953), 33f (all translations from this source are the author's own).

[10]Emil Brunner, *Dogmatik* II (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1950), 411-414.

so emphasized revelation as an inextended act of God, irrupting into history from above at an inextended point in history, that he obscured the fact that the historical life of Jesus is a necessary element of the revelation. In making use of Kierkegaard's term "incognito" to describe the humanity of Jesus, he frequently left the impression that the historical humanity of Christ was *only* an incognito. It is true that even at this time he also admitted that the historical life and action of Jesus, including his teaching, was an element of the revelation.[11] But the fact remains that at this earlier stage, Brunner manifested too little interest in the Jesus of history and the historical life of Jesus as essential to the revelation.

Althaus criticized him on this point,[12] and Brunner recognized the justice of the criticism.[13] He has come to realize that an adequate expression of the revelation in Christ must not merely emphasize revelation as a divine act from above, but must also give proportionate attention to the effects of that act of God in history. He now teaches clearly that the human nature and life of Jesus is not only an incognito (though it is also that) but that it is an essential part of the revelation. The revelation is the Person of Christ with his history.[14]

What Brunner said earlier needed saying. History as such is not revelation. He was also correct in noting that the history of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, could be mistaken for the history of a mere man, and therefore that the humanity and history of Jesus were not a direct revelation of God, but an indirect revelation, and a true incognito. However, his frequent denials that the history and humanity of Jesus were in themselves the revelation were open to the misinterpretation that the humanity of Jesus and his history were in no way revelation.

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[11]Emil Brunner, *Der Mittler* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1927), 371.

[12]Paul Althaus, "Brunner's 'Mittler': Zur Aufgabe der Christologie," in *Theologische Aufsätze* II (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1935), 169-182.

[13]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 280.

[14]Brunner, *Dogmatik* II, 427; idem, *Dogmatik* I, 40.

In this dialectical theology stage, he was afraid that by uniting the history of Jesus too intimately with the revelation of God he would be relativizing the revelation of God and betraying its transcendence. Today he sees that in the history of Jesus divine revelation is not relativized by history, but that the history is here absolutized by the divine revelation, by union with the Word. "How is that possible? How can the relative receive an absolute meaning? It *can* not receive it, but it *has* it because and wherever it is, at one and the same time, relative-human-temporal-terrestrial and also divine-absolute, the presence of God, eternity in time, heaven on earth."[15]

This is what has taken place in Jesus Christ. At a point of the relatively unique history which the historian describes, the Absolute has united himself with a human history. At one point the relatively unique and the absolutely unique are identical. Jesus *is* the Christ.[16] Jesus Christ *is* the Christian revelation.

Brunner believes that his most original contribution consists in the application of the category *Einmaligkeit*, uniqueness, to the revelation in Christ. The revelation in Christ is absolutely unique, and at the same time absolutely decisive, because it alone is at one and the same time a relatively unique event (like all other purely historical events) which is identical with the absolutely unique event of eternity in time. It is only here that the God-man is man-God. It is this absolute *Einmaligkeit* of the Christian revelation, which by its very nature can only take place once and for all, that separates it from all historical pantheism and from all mythology.

Brunner has pointed out that Bultmann has completely failed to understand the significance of this *Einmaligkeit* of the Christ-event as an event in the historical *continuum*, i.e., that there is a point in the historical *continuum* which is *at the same time* historical fact *and* God's personal

[15]Brunner, *Das Ewige als Zukunft und Gegenwart*, 44.

[16]Brunner, *Das Ewige als Zukunft und Gegenwart*, 44-45.

revelation. He believes that Bultmann is still under the influence of Lessing's dictum concerning the relative nature of *all* historical events, and he blames Bultmann's excessively critical reduction of the New Testament narratives on this deficient understanding for *das Einmalige* as an event in the historical continuum. Consequently, by speaking of God as acting only in the sense that he acts for me here and now, Bultmann is open to the objection of being in danger of eliminating the historical action of God *once and for all* on behalf of the whole world in Christ.[17]

From all that has been said it is clear that for Brunner the revelation in Christ is a Person. "Therefore, He, this Person, is the true Word. He Himself is the communication of God."[18] "Where God reveals Himself to me in His Word, there it is not a question of 'something'. In His Word, God does not hold a dogma class with me; He does not expose or propose a confession of faith to me, but He opens to me Himself."[19] "The revelation of God in Jesus Christ is not itself a doctrine (*Lehre*), but a Person with its history."[20]

The question, therefore, naturally arises: What is the relation between doctrine and personal revelation in the revelation in Jesus Christ? Brunner expresses this relationship in a dialectic of two statements. The first part of this dialectic we have already seen. "The incarnation of the Word, the entrance of God into our human condition ... that is the genuine revelation.... Therefore, ultimately, it is not a question of words, not even of divine words, but of the Word that he himself, Jesus Christ, is. Because he, himself, is the Word of God, all words have merely an instrumental meaning. Neither the spoken word,

[17]Brunner, *Dogmatik* II, 314-315.

[18]Emil Brunner, *Wahrheit als Begegnung* (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1938), 82 (all translations from this source are the author's own).

[19]Brunner, *Wahrheit als Begegnung*, 62.

[20]Brunner, *Dogmatik* I, 40.

nor its conceptual content is the thing (*Sache*) itself, but its 'frame', its container, and its instrument."[21]

The second part of the dialectic tells us that we cannot possess Jesus Christ, the content, the thing itself, the personal revelation except in this container. The frame is necessarily bound up with its content. Without the doctrine, the thing itself is not present for us. "God tells us 'something' in order to be present as the Lord and the Father in the Son through the Holy Spirit."[22] Even the most personal encounter with the personal revelation, Jesus Christ, which Peter experienced at the Sea of Galilee, involved doctrine which had to be grasped conceptually: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Though it is true that God does not hold a dogma class with us, nor propose to us a confession of faith, still "He does authentically teach us about Himself."[23] Brunner concludes that we can never separate the conceptual container from the personal presence contained in it. "We know that we can never have the one without the other, and we know at the same time that the important thing is to have this one in this other. Certainly the doctrine is related to the Word of God as sign and container; as instrumental and subservient to the thing itself; to real personal communion with God."[24] Doctrine is inextricably bound up with the personal revelation Jesus Christ himself. Yet only Jesus Christ is the revelation. Brunner consistently refuses to call doctrine revelation.

4. Revelation as witness to the revelation in Christ through Scripture. We who are not the contemporaries of Jesus Christ can only have access to this absolutely unique and personal revelation of God through the witness of the apostles. We only possess him in their witness to him. This should not be surprising. The revelation in Christ is an historical revelation. It is of the very nature of an historical

[21]Brunner, *Wahrheit als Begegnung*, 82.

[22]Brunner, *Wahrheit als Begegnung*, 83.

[23]Brunner, *Wahrheit als Begegnung*, 83.

[24]Brunner, *Wahrheit als Begegnung*, 83.

revelation that it can only reach later generations through the testimony of eyewitnesses.

Furthermore, Brunner finds that the written fixation of this testimony is implied in the nature of the historical revelation as such. "Only through its written fixation could the word of the apostles as the founding word, be set in confrontation with the living, oral word of the later Church as the founded word."[25] In order to preserve the original witness of the apostles in all its purity, it had to be fixed in writing. This alone could preserve it from distortion and contamination in the living stream of historical tradition. All later oral tradition and witness of the Church must have its source and norm in this written, original tradition of the New Testament canon precisely in order to preserve the genuinity of the tradition itself.[26]

Brunner warns, however, that the Scriptures are not the absolute norm, nor are they to be simply identified with the Word of God, for the normative authority of Scripture is conditional and relative. The absolute norm and authority is the revelation itself, Jesus Christ himself, who reveals himself to us by means of and in the witness of Scripture. We are unconditionally bound to Scripture as the medium of revelation for us. We are only conditionally bound to the authority of the witness of Scripture, i.e., on condition that and in so far as it bears witness to Jesus Christ himself. "Scripture is an absolute authority in so far as in it the revelation, Jesus Christ himself, is present there (*zur Geltung kommt*)."[27]

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[25]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 124-125.

[26]Emil Brunner, *Dogmatik* III (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1960), 69 (all translations from this source are the author's own). "Der neutestamentliche Kanon ist das von der Christusgemeinde geschaffene Gefäss, in dem die Urtradition gesammelt, bewahrt und gleichzeitig von der späteren Tradition als norma normans von der norma normata unterscheiden wird" (Brunner, *Dogmatik* III, 69).

[27]Brunner, *Dogmatik* I, 57; cf. 53-57.

For the same reason, Brunner objects to orthodox Protestantism's simple identification of the word of Scripture with the word of God. He concedes that the designation of Scripture as the "Word of God" was correct in the sense that it recognized and underlined the fact that the witness of the Scriptures is an authoritative form of the revelation, which is inseparable from the revelation in Christ, for the Scriptures are the mediating witness to the revelation in Christ, the true Word of God, and as such are a special form of the revelation.[28] But orthodox Protestantism went too far in identifying the human word of the Bible with God's Word and God's revelation by its teaching concerning the verbal inspiration of Scripture, in the sense of infallible divine dictation. Brunner admits that the biblical writers benefited from divine inspiration and from the guidance of the Holy Spirit. But this inspiration was not of such a nature as to exclude all human activity and research, nor even human weakness and capacity to err. Certainly it could happen that the inspiration and interior witness of the Spirit was perfectly received and mirrored by the human spirit, so that the "echo" in Scripture perfectly corresponds to the word whose echo it is. But it could also happen and did happen that this correspondence did not take place. The apostles could err and did err, for the human spirit can more or less fail to echo and reflect the witness of the divine Spirit.

Thus Brunner affirms that the apostolic witness in Scripture does possess a divine foundation in inspiration, "but nowhere does it raise the claim to be inspired *eo ipso* because it is apostolic witness, or in its entire extent and in all its particulars."[29] All the varied witness of the apostles are repeated attempts to express ever more adequately that which can never be fully expressed in human words: the revelation which God has given in the person of Jesus Christ. All their witness stands in a circle about Christ and points to him. Brunner compares

[28]Brunner, *Dogmatik* I, 22.

[29]Brunner, *Dogmatik* I, 36.

the Bible to a funnel, every point on whose surface is orientated toward the centre. This centre is Christ. Not everything stands in the same relation of proximity or of importance to the one who is really intended by all of Scripture. But the closer a statement of the Bible is to this point, the closer it is to him who is the real meaning of the Bible, and therefore the more important it is for the personal encounter in faith.[30] The Scriptures, therefore, are not to be identified directly with the Word of God, for they are at the same time a human word, and therefore are afflicted with all the infirmity and imperfection of all that is human. They are, as Luther wrote, "The crib in which Christ (the Word of God) lies."[31]

Brunner's teaching that Scripture is the witness to the revelation in Christ does not mean that the Scriptures are mere records of a revelation that has taken place. They themselves are a special and unique form of the revelation, for in them God himself, through the illumination of the apostles by his Spirit, provides us with the meaning of his unique and historical revelation in the life, suffering, death and resurrection of his Son. "The sending of the Son is one thing; the illumination of the apostles about the mystery of His Son is another; God has revealed Himself fully in His Son; but this revelation would not reach us without the sending and illumination of the apostles, who bear witness concerning Him."[32]

Brunner, therefore, in opposition to Barth, teaches that the Bible, as inspired interpretative witness to the revelation in Christ, is itself revelation in some objective sense. He admits with Barth that in the final and full sense of the word, revelation can only be an act, the act of God speaking to me here and now. Yet he insists that there is another side to the biblical concept of revelation that Barth did not see. This other side is the exact opposite of revelation as act. It tells

[30]Brunner, *Wahrheit als Begegnung*, 85-86.

[31]Brunner, *Dogmatik* I, 40.

[32]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 134.

us that God speaks with me here and now through the Holy Spirit on the basis of that, and by means of that which he has already spoken in Jesus Christ and the apostles. This implies what Barth refused to recognize, that there is "something 'revealed' or, as he (Barth) perhaps would say: *Offenbartheit.*"[33] This *Offenbartheit*, continues Brunner, is the Bible. He concedes that the Bible only becomes the Word of God for *me* through the present action of the Holy Spirit. But he insists that it is the word of the Bible which becomes God's word for me, and that it can only do that because it already *is* God's word in some sense.

Brunner compared the relation of the Bible to God's revelation in act, or actual revelation, with the relation of a phonograph disc to the music which has been engraved upon it, and which can be produced from it again. "It [the Bible] is a 'record'; an act that has become a substance. It is fixed and unchangeable; it is a portion of the world; it is available for everyone, even though its aspect as revelation (*Offenbarungssein*) is not at everyone's disposal. That which is at everyone's disposal, i.e., the bible-book with its fixed meaning, is that which God uses in order to say His personal Word to me today."[34] In this respect, Brunner appears to be closer than Barth to the "traditional" reformation conviction according to which the forms and means in which and through which God chose to reveal himself, and to which he freely but expressly bound the revelation, retain their character as revelation, even when they are not recognized as such.[35]

However, it must be noted that most recently Brunner has again placed the emphasis on God's Word as a present event for the believer in a manner similar to Barth. "Only God's communication of Himself to me is God's Word ... God does not teach us 'about' this and that. He opens Himself to me and by that fact also makes me open to Him.

[33]Brunner, *Natur und Gnade*, 35.

[34]Brunner, *Natur und Gnade*, 35.

[35]Willem van de Pol, *Das reformatorische Christentum in phänomenologischer Betrachtung* (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1956), 165.

That is the meaning of the 'Word of God' as it meets me in the bible. It is an 'I-Thou' Word. It does not allow itself to be universalized or objectivized. God's Word is no 'something', no objective 'in-itself', but it is a transitive event, a promise and a claim. The bible is not 'in itself' the Word of God...." " ... the word of the bible only becomes God's Word, when God Himself speaks to us."[36]

The question remains, therefore, whether Brunner today would still subscribe to the qualifications he formerly made to Barth's doctrine concerning revelation as the act of God speaking to me here and now in and through Scripture. He has not repudiated his former position explicitly. But neither has he repeated it in his most recent clarification of the relation between the Word of God and the word of Scripture in the third volume of his *Dogmatik*. It could be that while still admitting that the Bible is in a "certain objective sense" the Word of God, he finds it embarrassing with his theory of inspiration to explain this "certain objective sense" in a more accurate and less confused manner. He would prefer therefore to insist more on the other aspect of his doctrine: that the Scripture does not become the Word of God *for me* in the full sense, except when God himself by the Holy Spirit makes me certain of his immediate presence and permits me to hear his "Thou"-word, so that it meets me here and now in a completely personal manner.[37]

5. Revelation as witness to the revelation in Christ through the Church. The revelation in Christ and in the Scriptures is transmitted to men of all ages through the living witness of the Church. Because Jesus Christ is the living and present Lord of the Church, "his revelation is a living present event in the Church and through the Church."[38] The proclamation of the revelation in Christ by the community of the faithful living in union with Christ through the Spirit (the *Ekklesia*) is

[36]Brunner, *Dogmatik* III, 274; cf. 281.

[37]Brunner, *Dogmatik* III, 274.

[38]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 135.

itself a form of the revelation. This preaching of the Church becomes living revelation whenever God wills to vitalize it with his Spirit.

It is the essential function of the *Ekklesia* to bear witness to the revelation in Christ in which God manifested his own nature to be communicating love. It exists for the sake of this witness. The Church is primarily nothing else than the organ and bearer of the Good News by its preaching and proclamation. "Everything which serves this proclamation is church, and it is nothing else than this function which makes church to be church: preaching existence as the historical continuum of the revelation."[39]

In using the word "preaching" (*Verkündigung*), Brunner does not restrict its meaning to verbal preaching. It is for this reason that he employed the phrase "preaching existence." There is question here not merely of proclaiming words, but of carrying to future ages the life in which God communicated himself. For this reason, Church is "every form of historical life which has its source in Jesus Christ, and in which the self-communication of God continuously takes place."[40] The Church is the bridge and the *continuum* for the historical revelation in Christ, not merely because it bears the word concerning the Christ down through the ages, but also because it carries his Spirit and life as communicated by him to his first *Ekklesia.* The Church, therefore, is both the organ for proclaiming the word concerning Christ, and at the same time the place where he makes himself present.

Consequently, the *Ekklesia* bears witness to Christ in two ways: through its word and through its life. It is only in the unity of witness by its word and witness by its life that the *Ekklesia* can perfectly fulfill its function of historically mediating God's revelation in Christ to men. Genuine tradition, as the *continuum* that binds the unique, historical revelation in Christ with the present, is the preaching existence of

[39]Brunner, *Dogmatik* III, 17; cf. 159.

[40]Brunner, *Dogmatik* III, 18.

the brotherhood of the faithful which mirrors the preaching of the apostles and the life of the original *Ekklesia* as recorded in the biblical canon.[41] It is this preaching existence of the *Ekklesia* which makes known the revelation that occurred in Christ, that announces the revelation to come in glory, and that, while doing so, becomes itself faith creating revelation—*ubi et quando visum est Deo.*[42]

6. Revelation as witness to the revelation in Christ through the Spirit. All the forms of the revelation that we have encountered thus far have been revelation in the objective sense. In all these forms, revelation is something outside of me, and because of this fact they are not revelation in the full sense of the term. "For revelation is not a 'something', a thing, but an occurrence, an event, involving us and in us."[43] The receiving subject is always an essential and integral part of the full reality of "revelation" in its full and proper sense. Unless the objective form of the revelation becomes a revelation for someone, it is abortive. It remains merely an attempt at revelation. Without faith, revelation in the full sense of the term has not really taken place.

The passage from the objective form of the revelation to the complete revelation in and for the subject is effected by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. By means of this illumination of the Spirit, the historical distance and exteriority of the revelation in Christ, Scripture and the Church are overcome. By this one act of enlightenment, I become contemporaneous with Christ just as Peter was, and in a way that Caiphas who refused to believe was not. The revelation is no longer outside of me, but now speaks interiorly to me through the Spirit. "It is God making Himself present to me; the experience of the presence of God in His Word. Here faith and experience are one.

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[41]Brunner, *Dogmatik* III, 160; 18-19.

[42]Emil Brunner, "Der Zweck der Verkündigung," in *Sinn und Wesen der Verkündigung* (Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1941), 44.

[43]Brunner, *Dogmatik* I, 23.

That I can believe is the same thing as that I experience God's presence in His Word; that I experience Christ's Lordship over me."[44]

Corresponding, therefore, to the historical revelation and accompanying it is the Holy Spirit, "the interior revelation and self-presence of God."[45] It is only through this interior and personal presence of God through the Holy Spirit that the historical revelation becomes known. Faith is no mere recollection of a past event, but experience of *Him Who* is present in his revelation.

Brunner defines "Holy Spirit" as the mode of God's existence (*Existenzweise*) through which he is interiorly present to us and operates in our mind and heart. He sees the primary and decisive effect of the operation of the Spirit to consist in making present to us the Christ, who in the apostles' testimony to Jesus as the Christ confronts us as a fact of the past. It is the operation of the Holy Spirit which transforms the word about Christ into the Word of God. "The Holy Spirit in the New Testament meaning of the term is the presence of God witnessing to the historical Christ as a living and personal presence, and making Him effective as living and personally present."[46]

To this mysterious interior illumination of the human spirit by the Holy Spirit corresponds, on the part of man, that act by which man receives the revelation, the personal act of man which is given to man in the illumination itself. In the New Testament, Brunner finds this subjective aspect of revelation clearly summarized in the word *pistis*, faith. *Pistis*, translated by Brunner as "trusting-obedience" (*Vertrauensgehorsam*), is described as the personal answer of self-surrender to the Word of God, in which the divine self-communication first achieves its goal, and also in which true communion between God and man first begins. *Pistis* implies the personal recognition of the Lord as Lord, obedience, and the personal acceptance of God's

[44]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 167-168.

[45]Brunner, *Dogmatik* I, 226.

[46]Brunner, *Dogmatik* III, 26.

prodigal love in a grateful return of love. Faith is total self-surrender on the basis of, and in reception of, the unconditioned self-surrender of God.[47]

Thus faith is, Brunner admits, "first of all an act of knowledge (*Erkenntnis*) ... the awareness of the revealing God ... the *Aufgeschlossenwerden* for the revelation," which "is itself revelation."[48] But this act of personal knowledge, which is such a very unique kind of knowledge that Brunner hesitates to call it knowledge, is at the same time an act of acknowledgement that Christ is the Lord, in obedience and submission, and because in this act of personal encounter with the Lord he is recognized as absolutely selfless, prodigal love, this obedience of faith is deepened to include trust, which Brunner calls the heart of faith.[49]

Therefore, faith for Brunner is wholly and completely a personal relation: "My trusting obedience to Him whom I encounter as my gracious Lord."[50] "The self-disclosure of the gracious Lord in the 'I', and the obedient trusting surrender of the previously self-centred 'I', are the two sides of the same event."[51] "The faith of the Christian has no other object than Jesus Christ, God in His personal revelation."[52] Faith, therefore, is an act *sui generis*, which does not take place in the dimension of "I-something," or in the dimension of "I-truth," but in the dimension of love, the dimension of "I-Thou." Faith is not belief in a teaching, but in Jesus Christ himself, who in the proclamation of the Good News takes possession of our hearts and overpowers them

[47]Brunner, *Wahrheit als Begegnung*, 52.

[48]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 35-36.

[49]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 36.

[50]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 37.

[51]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 37.

[52]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 38.

as the truth and reality of God. In faith Christ is present, revealing himself as the living Lord.[53]

However, Brunner tempers this teaching by admitting that though ultimately faith is not a "thinking about something," but personal encounter, this personal event is inseparably united with a conceptual content which can be the object of thought, with truth in the ordinary sense of the term, truth as knowledge, knowledge as the perception of an object or of a fact, for God only communicates himself to us in such a way that at the same time he tells us the truth about himself. We can only enter into communion with him, and we can only surrender ourselves to him, by believing "that which" he says to us. Jesus Christ is only present to us "in, with and under" the doctrine concerning him. We can never separate the conceptual form and framework from the personal presence contained in the form. But we must clearly distinguish them.[54]

The presence and operation of the Holy Spirit in the heart of man does not make man completely passive in faith, the mere stage for the action of God. "Faith is certainly a gift of God, but it assuredly is not an *action* of God, in the sense that God would be the one who believes in us."[55] Faith is unequivocally an act of man, even though it is at the same time a gift of God and a work of the Holy Spirit. Spirit never works upon spirit in any other way than by calling forth the self-activity of understanding and will. "The communication of the Spirit in the New Testament is always personal, and therefore is to be understood according to the analogy of a dialogue, not according to the analogy of a causal process. Faith is response, answer to God's Word, a personal act...."[56] "God does not believe; God does not obey; God does not

[53]Brunner, *Dogmatik* III, 199.

[54]Brunner, *Wahrheit als Begegnung*, 83-85.

[55]Brunner, *Dogmatik* III, 27.

[56]Emil Brunner, *Vom Werk des heiligen Geistes* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1935), 43 (all translations from this source are the author's own).

say: Abba, Father. But God causes me to do it."[57] "That our own decision is *God's gift*, and precisely in that fact *our decision*—that is the marvel of the Holy Spirit."[58]

It is only in faith, which God alone produces in man, that the self-manifestation, self-revelation and self-communication of God attain their goal. Only when God's being-for-us and man's being-for-God (*Für-Gott-Sein*) become one, does that occur which every self-manifestation of God properly intends: the establishment of his influence in the creature, the recognition by the creature that he is the God of Love, and the gift of the creature's love in return. Brunner believes that if we oppose revelation and faith to one another as "content" and knowledge of this content, we do not fully appreciate what happens in faith. Here faith and its content no longer permit themselves to be distinguished. Faith itself is what is intended in the revelation. "In ipsa fide Christus adest," repeats Brunner after Luther. The certitude of divine sonship is nothing else than God himself speaking in us—that which the New Testament calls the presence of the Spirit. Revelation attains its goal and perfection in the fact that man now only listens, i.e., that he allows God alone to speak in him. It is only here, in the ὑπακοὴ πίστεως, in the "listening from below," that revelation is complete.[59]

7. The revelation in Glory. The completion and perfection effected by the Holy Spirit in faith is necessarily relative and temporary, for the revelation in Christ in all its forms orientates the believer towards the revelation in the future at the end of time—toward the *parousia* of the Lord, the unveiled presence of him whose presence is now veiled. Although God has already come in Christ and in the Spirit, although the faith is already a possession of him, nevertheless,

[57]Brunner, *Vom Werk des heiligen Geistes*, 45.

[58]Brunner, *Vom Werk des heiligen Geistes*, 46.

[59]Brunner, *Dogmatik* III, 200-201.

this coming awaits its consummation, and this possession in faith is at the same time an expectation of the living God who is leading history to its goal. This goal of God's movement toward men is his self-glorification and self-communication through his perfect presence to man in personal encounter. We cannot believe in Jesus Christ, the revelation of the Father, without at the same time believing in the revelation in glory. "As the Word of God, He is the revealed plan and decision of God. In Him, God reveals the goal of mankind and of the world. To believe in Jesus Christ is to believe in this goal."[60]

Only from this final revelation, where the perfect presence and encounter are effected, can we understand the intention of every form of revelation and its meaning. Revelation is never merely a communication of knowledge, but life-giving and life-creating communion, and perfect revelation in glory is perfect communion through the complete presence of God with us, and the complete presence of man with God in Jesus Christ. It is in Jesus Christ, at his *parousia* and *apokalypsis*, that we shall see God face to face.[61]

Brunner insists on this point because he accuses Bultmann's demythologizing of having effected a de-kerygmatization.[62] The essential Christian message does not merely tell us that God will act in the future through the fulfillment of human life, as Bultmann teaches.[63] The essential Christian eschatological hope is that God will act in the future in the presence (*parousia*) of the risen and glorified Christ. It is this action that Brunner insists must be assured.

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[60]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 196.

[61]Brunner, *Dogmatik* I, 24.

[62]Brunner, *Dogmatik* III, 452.

[63]Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (London: SCM Press, 1960), 77; Rudolf Bultmann, "Die Christliche Hoffnung und das Problem der Entmythologisierung," in Rudolf Bultmann, *Glauben und Verstehen* III (Tübingen: Mohr, 1960), 90.

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

The attention given to revelation in the theology of Emil Brunner and of other modern Protestant theologians has provided a stimulus to Catholic theologians[64] that has even reached the level of the textbook.[65] The result has been a deepening and enrichment of our understanding of a concept that had all too often been taken for granted. Too frequently, Catholic theologians have emphasized revelation as supernatural truth in too exclusive a manner, while paying slight attention to revelation's character as event and to its personal nature as encounter between God and man. Not that what they said was not true, but it called for complementation, and provided an apparent excuse for the Protestant misunderstanding of the Catholic conception of revelation. Karl Rahner has noted that: "In the 'school-theology', in opposition to modern Protestant and Catholic biblical theology, revelation is, as a matter of course, treated as a purely educational revelation in the form of propositions, and not as an eventful revelatory action in which God deals creatively and graciously with man, and in so doing, speaks his Word as an interior element of his action upon man; or (expressed more biblically) in which this action is God's Word, because God's Word essentially effects what it says."[66]

Consequently, Brunner's theology of revelation with its emphasis upon revelation as the unique event of God's personal self-disclosure in Jesus Christ in order to effect personal encounter with his creatures

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[64]Cf. for example: Michael Schmaus, *Katholische Dogmatik* I (Munich: Hueber Verlag, 1960), 7-22; idem, *Katholische Dogmatik* III-1 (Munich: Hueber Verlag, 1958), 751; Otto Semmelroth, *Gott und Mensch in Begegnung* (Frankfurt: Knecht Verlag, 1958), 43ff.; Werner Bulst, *Offenbarung* (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1960), 55ff.

[65]Albert Lang, *Fundamentaltheologie* I (Munich: Hueber Verlag, 1962), 46-53.

[66]Karl Rahner, "Wort und Eucharistie," in Karl Rahner, *Schriften zur Theologie* IV (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1960), 316 (all translations from this source are the author's own).

in faith has much to recommend it to the Catholic theologian seeking to restate more adequately his own theology of revelation. The emphasis on sin as revelation's contrast and background; the stress on revelation as personal truth whose objective is not mere knowledge or instruction, but which demands self-surrender and transformation in faith; the application of the "I-Thou" categories of Ebner and Buber to this personal encounter between God and man; the original use of the category of *Einmaligkeit* to underline the unique character of biblical revelation; the appreciation of the history of revelation as the history of God's revealing acts; all these are to be counted among the not-so-small feathers in Brunner's theological bonnet, at a time when orthodoxy, both Protestant and Catholic, was placing the emphasis upon revelation as the communication of a list of doctrinal propositions.

Of course there are also a number of flaws in Brunner's synthesis concerning revelation, but it is not possible to deal with all of them in this article. However, the question must be raised whether Brunner's principal contribution has not also become his Achilles' heel. Has Brunner's reaction against the propositional conception of revelation betrayed him into an exaggerated personalism?

The answer would seem to be that despite Brunner's frequent use of exaggerated overstatement as a quasi-literary form, his underlying intention and meaning cannot be interpreted as an exaggerated personalism. For all his insistence that the revelation is the person of Jesus Christ, and that the truth of revelation is the truth of personal encounter with God in Jesus Christ in which we "become" truth, Brunner also makes it clear that this personal revelation "is inseparably linked with a conceptual content, with 'truth' in the ordinary sense of the word, truth as doctrine, knowledge as the interior perception of an objective reality. God only speaks to us and gives Himself to us in such a way that at the same time he tells us 'something', i.e., the truth about Himself; and we can only enter into communion with Him, we can only give ourselves to Him in trusting obedience by believing 'that which' He says to us."[67]

[67]Brunner, *Wahrheit als Begegnung*, 84-85.

In Brunner's conception, revelation is above all the personal presence of God in Jesus Christ who is made present to us through the Holy Spirit in the personal encounter of faith. But it is implied in the explanation given above that revelation is secondarily, and as a means to the primary end, a communication of truths concerning God and his saving Will, for "God tells us 'something', in order to be present as the Lord and the Father in the Son through the Holy Spirit."[68] In reaction to the exaggeration of Protestant orthodoxy, and in a rather arbitrary manner, Brunner insists on calling the primary element alone revelation. But this is principally a matter of terminology. He has already made it clear that the personal presence of God in the Person of Jesus Christ and the communication of truths are two necessarily connected elements in the single process by which God communicates himself to man. This is the essential, and this admission makes his restriction of terminology appear inconsistent.

If we do not agree with his terminology, we must agree with the order he assigns to the two elements that constitute God's revelation of himself to man, for "revelation is not, in its primary form, the communication of a determined number of propositions ... but an historical dialogue between God and man, in which something *occurs* ... and the communication refers to and is related to the occurrence, to the act of God.... Revelation is a saving event, and therefore, and in relation to this, a communication of truths."[69]

This action of God is the Word of God, the means by which God manifests himself and his saving Will to man at the same time that he communicates himself to man. This word whose culmination is the personal Word, Jesus Christ, "in its complete and original nature may not be conceived as a propositional instruction 'about something', nor as a mere intentional pointer to another reality."[70] Revelation is God's

[68]Brunner, *Wahrheit als Begegnung*, 83; cf. 82.

[69]Karl Rahner, "Zur Frage der Dogmenentwicklung," in Karl Rahner, *Schriften zur Theologie* I (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1954), 59 (author's own translation).

[70]Rahner, "Wort und Eucharistie," 322.

personal and saving action in the historical event and prophetic word that attained its supreme expression in the person of Jesus Christ, which includes a communication of truth as an inner element, but which is not exhausted by this aspect. It is through their encounter with God in his personal presence in his saving events in history, of which the truths communicated are for the most part the interpretation and explanation, that men personally experienced in faith who God is and what are his plans for man.[71]

But if Brunner's underlying intention and meaning must be absolved from exaggerated personalism, his expression and terminology often obscure the fact that revelation is *also* a communication of truth. A stigma has been stamped upon viewing revelation as a communication of truths because of the inadequate way that this has been done in the past. Certainly revelation is not primarily a set of propositions, nor is revelation given to us as a mere addition to our store of theoretical knowledge. It is likewise erroneous to believe "that the revelation has been made to us without an intrinsic relation with the one and total reality which is Christ; that it has been delivered to us as a simple formulary in a series of propositions detached from this unique mystery and therefore, separated one from the other like majors of syllogisms all ready for our future reasonings."[72] It cannot be repeated too often that the revealed datum is primarily the incarnate Word. It is in him that the mystery of unity which is Christianity has been communicated in an intelligible way. He is the Life and the revelation of that Life. He is the mystery of the fullness of the gift of God, and the communication of that mystery. "As He is the donation of the trinitarian Life, He is also its revelation. He is the very Word made flesh, the Word that has become perceptible, the Son in whom the Father appears, in whom the Spirit makes Himself known, and who dwells among us."[73]

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[71]Schmaus, *Katholische Dogmatik* III-1, 751.

[72]Henri de Lubac, "Le problème du développement du dogme," *Recherches de Science Religiense* 35 (1948), 155 (author's own translation).

[73]Emile Mersch, *La Théologie du Corps Mystique* II (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1944), 72 (all translations from this source are the author's own).

But at the same time, it is true that the abstraction which separates the revealed message from the Person of the Revealer is a legitimate one: *abstrahere non est mentiri.* It is not only legitimate but even necessary to separate the global and substantial revelation in Christ into particular truths concerning the Trinity, the incarnate Word, the Church, etc., for the human spirit cannot assimilate and preserve the total truth presented in Christ except by actively analysing and dissecting it according to its own laws, by expressing it in clear and explicit terms.

Admittedly, it must never be forgotten that this process is one of abstraction from an object which is identical with the revealing Person, whose content we will never exhaust.[74] The light which is Christ has been broken and refracted into numerous propositions and formulae to direct and control the inner impulses of faith. As Brunner says, these propositions are the signs and pointers to the substantial revelation which is Christ himself. Each expresses a particular aspect of the inexhaustible riches of God's Wisdom disclosed in the incarnate Word. "The words, the revelation in formulas are the manifestation on the empirical plane of the substantial revelation which is Christ."[75]

The frequently too-exclusive identification of propositions and revelation should not blind us to the truth contained in this exaggeration. Formulas and propositions are not the substantial revelation which is Jesus Christ. But neither is the substantial revelation, the Person of Jesus Christ, the only element in the complex process by which God manifests himself to man, revelation. Jesus Christ is the primary element. This Brunner has emphasized well. He is not the only element, however, even though the other elements are secondary and derive their value from their intrinsic relation to him. As the explicitation of the significance of the action of God in Jesus Christ, propositions are a necessary and essential part of the revelation in its finished form.

In reality, there is no contradiction between Brunner's conception

[74]de Lubac, "Le problème du développement du dogme," 155, 156, 157.

[75]Mersch, *La Théologie du Corps Mystique* II, 113.

of revelation as a Person and the conception of revelation as being, in addition, a communication of truths, which Brunner eyes with suspicion. Each conception is true at its proper epistemological level. In the order of the concrete with its vital and existential character, the revelation is Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word. On the level of abstraction and of concepts, where the mind seeks to distinguish formal aspects of the unified and concrete reality, revelation finds expression in propositions and formulas, and is a communication of truths. Both levels are legitimate and necessary, for God's revelation to man is given on both levels. Consequently, an adequate explanation must consider both levels, in their proper order of importance and in their relation to one another.

It must be conceded, however, that Brunner's reaction to orthodox Protestantism in this respect was a healthy one, even though it may not have been expressed with sufficient care, for Christ is the most important element in Christian revelation, and the concrete, existential order is the order in which we must always begin, and the order to which we must always return. Otherwise, revelation will be erroneously conceived as having been given to us simply in order to add some new elements (admittedly very elevated and profound) to the store of knowledge that man has already acquired or can acquire by natural reason. Actually, revelation is the vehicle of a personal call to God's Kingdom, demanding a conversion of man's entire being in faith at the same time that it opens up for him new horizons into a whole new world.[76]

Nothing could be more disastrous than to reduce the concrete and personal revelation of God in Jesus Christ to the level of a class in scientific theology. The revelation of God in Christ is the personal self-disclosure of God that calls for personal acceptance in faith and love. Brunner has highlighted this aspect well. But just as personal self-disclosure implies a communication of "truth," so God's self-communication in Jesus Christ implies a communication of "truths"

[76]de Lubac, "Le problème du développement du dogme," 157.

in the form of propositions, and biblical truth that "becomes" implies truth that "is." Christian revelation is never an abstract system,[77] and yet it is also a communication of truth in and through the personal self-communication of God in the incarnate Word.

[77]Romano Guardini, *Die Offenbarung* (Würzburg: Werkbund Verlag, 1940), 118.

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PRIMAL REVELATION AND THE NATURAL KNOWLEDGE OF GOD: BRUNNER AND CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

Joseph J. Smith, S.J.

Protestant and Catholic theologians today are seeking a more thorough knowledge of each other's thought in an effort to work together toward a more adequate understanding of the revelation given in Christ. At the same time they seek to delimit more clearly the areas of disagreement that separate them. One of these areas is the doctrine concerning the primal revelation and the natural knowledge of God. In this area, the Catholic theologian finds a special interest in the position represented by Emil Brunner of Zürich, for Brunner over a period of years has consistently defended a mediate position between that of the earlier Karl Barth and Catholic theology. Moreover, the Catholic theologian can learn much from a study of a position which is at the same time so near and yet so far from his own.

Emil Brunner's doctrine concerning the original revelation in creation has been formulated and polished in controversy with Karl Barth, receiving its impetus in 1934 from Brunner's *Natur und Gnade* and Barth's response: *Nein! Antwort an Emil Brunner.* In 1937, at the conclusion of *Der Mensch im Widerspruch*, Brunner felt that "the opposition between Barth and me consists mainly in two points: that I, in opposition to Barth, but in harmony with the Scriptures and the Reformers, maintain that God even now is manifest in His

creation, and secondly, that I do not view the human existence of man as a bagatelle, but as a theologically relevant fact, which can only be understood from the idea of the image of God."[1] In 1941, Brunner charged that the source of Barth's denial of this biblical and traditional doctrine of a primal revelation in creation lay in his failure to distinguish the *principium cognoscendi* from the *principium essendi*, "because he thinks that the recognition of a revelation in creation must have as its consequence the recognition of a natural knowledge of God."[2] This consequence Brunner has always denied, and again in 1946 he reiterated that "on the one hand, the reality of the revelation in creation must be acknowledged, but on the other hand, the possibility of a correct, valid natural knowledge of God must be denied."[3]

Brunner specifies that this primal revelation is still present to us in two forms: in man created according to God's image, and in the created world as the manifestation of the divine power and wisdom. This article will limit itself to a discussion of the second form of the primal revelation.

CREATED WORLD AS MANIFESTATION OF GOD'S POWER AND WISDOM

The whole Christian tradition is unanimous in recognizing a

[1]Emil Brunner, *Der Mensch im Widerspruch* (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1937), 541 (all translations from this source are the author's own).

[2]Emil Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft* (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1941), 80 (all translations from this source are the author's own).

[3]Emil Brunner, *Dogmatik* I (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1946), 138 (all translations from this source are the author's own). It is to be noted that in the course of time it has been Barth who has modified his position. In 1950, in Volume 3, Part 3 of the *Dogmatik*, he is willing to admit a manifestation of God in creation which only the believer can perceive, whose eyes have been opened by the revelation in Christ. Cf. Emil Brunner, *Dogmatik* III/3 (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1960), 58-59; Henri Bouillard, *Karl Barth* III (Paris: Aubier, 1957), 131-132 (all translations from this source are the author's own).

revelation of God in the created world. The Church Fathers, the Scholastics, and the Reformers all insist on this point, because Scripture teaches it beyond the shadow of a doubt.[4] As early as 1927, long before his controversy with Barth, Brunner wrote: "It is impossible to believe in a Christian manner in a unique revelation, in the Mediator, without believing in a general revelation of God in creation."[5] Apart from the Old Testament, he believes that the clear testimony of Saint Paul in his letter to the Romans (1:19ff.) should be sufficient to convince any Christian. Here Paul teaches that the "natural man," to whom the message of salvation is addressed, lives in the sphere of God's anger, because he has sinned against the truth which was made known to him, for "what may be known about God is manifest to them. For God has manifested it to them (Rom. 1:19)." The conclusion to be drawn seems more than evident to Brunner. "Therefore, the revelation of God is not lacking. God has revealed Himself to all."[6]

But Paul becomes even more explicit. "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen—His everlasting power also and His divinity—being understood through the things that are made (Rom. 1:20)." In this sentence of Paul, Brunner sees a basis for affirming that the general revelation given to all men is a "revelation of creation" in two senses: first, inasmuch as this revelation has been present to men since the creation of the world; second, inasmuch as this revelation takes place through the works of creation. Furthermore, because the text states that this revelation can be perceived by an act of *noesis*, by an act of man's reason, the revelation is addressed to man as a rational being. Man has been purposely created in such a way that he might be able to hear and perceive the Word of God as manifested in creation. A final point that Brunner makes in relation to v. 20 is that Paul does not merely teach the possibility of a knowledge of

[4]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 60.

[5]Emil Brunner, *Der Mittler* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1927), 13 (all translations from this source are the author's own).

[6]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 64.

God from creation, which man once possessed but lost, nor does he teach merely that man has a present possibility of knowing God from creation. Rather, Paul insists that man possesses an actual knowledge of God, although this knowledge, as a result of sin, is immediately changed into a delusion. It is a knowledge, therefore, "which does not operate as knowledge, but which, through the ferment of sin, is converted into idolatry."[7]

Brunner explains that the reason for Paul's insistence on man's actual knowledge of God is that he wishes to demonstrate that man is guilty before God, that the message of salvation in Jesus Christ comes to men who are themselves responsible for the state in which they find themselves, because they have refused to act according to the revelation given to them. Without this general revelation before Christ and the prophets, man would not be responsible and therefore would not be a sinner. But now he has known, and he has suppressed this truth about God "in unrighteousness." "Every man is a sinner, because every man could know God, and actually knows Him, but as a result of his defiance, man suppresses this knowledge, does not let it take effect, but transforms it into folly."[8]

Brunner finds this same teaching concerning the revelation of God in creation contained in Rom. 1:28-32, Jn. 1:4, and Acts 14:17, 17:27. It is this teaching which is the foundation for the assertion of man's responsibility before God. It is the presupposition for the call to repentance proclaimed by the missionary.[9]

But even if this "revelation of creation" were not expressly taught in the Bible, it is implicitly contained in the biblical notion of creation. God manifests Himself in the works of His creation; the works of God's creation in turn reflect back on the Creator. Brunner is aware that creatures veil God as much as, or more than, they reveal Him. But

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[7]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 65.

[8]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 65.

[9]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 65-66.

the infinite qualitative difference between Creator and creature, the vast chasm that separates them, is no reason for denying what Saint Paul affirms, "that precisely the divinity of God, His invisible nature, His superiority over the world manifests itself in the works of creation."[10] Paul says this because it is true, and it is true because God willed it to be true. "God's will and nature are such that He creates in order to reveal Himself. Creation bears the imprint of its Creator because of His creative will and His creative act."[11]

For this reason, Brunner can see no cause for mistrusting or denying the doctrine of the analogy of being. He finds that it has been the commonly held doctrine of the Church from the beginning, and that it expresses nothing else than the fact that it has pleased God to create the world in such a way that it reflects "His eternal power and divinity." But, Brunner adds, this does not mean that man actually sees God in creation as He really is. It does mean that creation is an objective vehicle or means for the revelation of God, whether man recognize it as such or not.[12]

But if men do not perceive the objective revelation of God in creation, it is not because they do not possess the subjective capacity to do so. Paul insists that "since the creation of the world, His invisible nature is clearly seen ... being understood through the things that are made." Brunner interprets this to mean that man has known God from creation with his intellect. Man has been so created that he might be able to know God through the works of creation. For this purpose, God has given him an intellect. Through this special possession of man, the objective "revelation of creation" becomes "general revelation," for the objective means of revelation and the subjective capacity of knowing are ordered to one another.[13]

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[10]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 68.

[11]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 68.

[12]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 68-69.

[13]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 69.

Yet despite the objective revelation of God in creation, and despite man's possession of an intellect which was given to him precisely that he might be able to recognize God as manifested in the works of creation, man does not truly know God from creation. Brunner insists that man possesses no true natural knowledge of God, that there is no "natural theology." "Rather, man's sin consists precisely in this, that he suppresses the knowledge of God that arises in him through God's revelation, so that the revelation that God has given for a knowledge of Himself becomes for man the origin of his idolatry."[14]

On the other hand, Brunner does not mean to say that man possesses absolutely no knowledge of God from the revelation in creation. He does not wish to deny that man knows about God in some way. His thought is summed up in the following dialectic which he finds in Saint Paul: "that man could not be a sinner, if he did not know about God, but that because he is a sinner, and insofar as he, as a sinner, remains in self-isolation, man cannot know God correctly.... His knowledge of God is as perverted as his heart."[15]

Man, therefore, knows enough about God from the revelation in creation to make him guilty and responsible for his sin. But because it is a knowledge corrupted by sin, it cannot become a knowledge of God "which actually takes effect";[16] it cannot become a true knowledge; it cannot develop into a natural theology,[17] nor can it save man from his

[14]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 66.

[15]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 66.

[16]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 66: " ... faktisch sich auswirkende Gotteserkenntnis."

[17]In his debate with Barth, Brunner spoke favorably of a Christian natural theology or objective natural theology (cf. Emil Brunner, *Natur und Gnade*, 2nd ed. [Tübingen: Mohr, 1935], v, 50 [all translations from this source are the author's own]). By this he meant the "doctrine of the objective knowability of God in His works of creation, as is possible only within Christian theology, i.e., only on the basis of the revelation in Christ, the Holy Scriptures and the illumination of the Spirit...." (Brunner, *Natur und Gnade*, 50). In fact, Brunner finds that the

sin. The Bible does not say that sin has obliterated the perceptibility of God in His creation. "What is said is this: that sin ... has made man blind for that which is visibly set before his eyes. Precisely for this reason are men without excuse, because they do not want to recognize God, who has manifested Himself to them so clearly."[18] Only the believer in Jesus Christ, with the guidance of Scripture, can see in creation the true God and not idols.[19] Only through the revelation in Christ can man see the revelation of God as it really is.[20]

Despite these limitations, Brunner maintains that the "revelation of creation" is of fundamental importance, that it cannot be denied without disastrous consequences. "Only through this revelation ... is man responsible for his sins; only because of it can the gospel's call to repentance be proclaimed as a call for a return to what was in the beginning. It is therefore the indispensable presupposition for the Good News of Christ and, as such, an integral part of the good tidings concerning God's saving grace."[21]

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explanation of Romans 1 and 2, as well as the interpretation of the first article of the Creed, impose this task on theology. At the same time, however, Brunner denied the possibility of a rational natural theology independent of the revelation in Christ. He called this natural theology in the subjective sense (Brunner, *Natur und Gnade*, v, 50). Because his use of the term "Christian natural theology" occasioned misunderstanding of his thought by Barth, Brunner preferred thereafter to speak rather of the Christian teaching concerning the revelation of God in creation or in nature (cf. Brunner, *Natur und Gnade*, v, 60). At the same time he reserved the term "natural theology," which for many Protestants carried ominous connotations, for the rational, subjective natural theology which he repudiates and which he associates with the Catholic Church. The term "natural theology" has this latter sense in the text.

[18]Brunner, *Natur und Gnade*, 12.

[19]Brunner, *Natur und Gnade*, 12.

[20]Brunner, *Natur und Gnade*, 14, 46.

[21]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 67.

BRUNNER'S DOCTRINE AND CATHOLIC THEOLOGY

It is clear from the exposition of Brunner's position that it is rather close to the Catholic position, perhaps closer than Brunner himself realizes. Brunner's interpretation of Rom. 1:19ff. is clear, accurate, and faithful. It penetrates to the heart of the dialectic of Paul's thought: Because God has revealed Himself in created reality since the creation of the world, man from the time of Adam to the present perceives the invisible reality of God in the contemplation of what God has made. Yet man, as he is found to be from the time of Adam, and as he is represented in the Gentile, has refused to acknowledge God in gratitude, and so his heart is now darkened and without insight. God appears now only in the gods, but even this misunderstanding of God includes a knowledge, or better, something like a knowledge of God. In these gods, man still holds God fast, and in them he still knows of God. But he does not know of Him as God, i.e., as the "true and living" God to whom he must be converted.[22] The Apostle affirms the coexistence in the pagan of a knowledge of God and a lack of knowledge of God at the same time. He simultaneously knows God and does not know Him. At the center of this paradox stands the interior dialectic of culpable nonrecognition of God. The knowledge that the pagan has of God makes his idolatry inexcusable, and this idolatry, which is refusal to acknowledge God, obscures the knowledge that it presupposes.[23]

Furthermore, it is not Paul's intention here to invite the pagans to elaborate a natural theology. If he admits that the pagans have a certain knowledge of God, he knows at the same time that they have refused to acknowledge and recognize Him. In Paul's eyes, they will only *de*

[22]Cf. Heinrich Schlier, "Die Erkenntnis Gottes nach den Briefen des Apostels Paulus," in *Gott in Welt* I, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (Freiburg: Herder, 1964), 515-522.

[23]Bouillard, *Karl Barth* III, 121-122.

facto rediscover God when they are rediscovered by God through the revelation in Christ. They will only know the true God by believing in the gospel.

The Catholic theologian up to this point finds himself in agreement with Brunner. But when Brunner, on the basis of his accurate analysis and with an appeal to the Reformation theology concerning the radical corruption of man by sin, draws the theological conclusion from the affirmations of Paul "that sinful man is incapable of raising himself from his idolatrous superstition to a true knowledge of God, without being enlightened by a special, historical revelation,"[24] that "this natural knowledge of God *necessarily* becomes, in sinful man, idolatry, or, what is again fundamentally the same thing—an abstract impersonal knowledge of God,"[25] he appears to have gone beyond Paul's statement of fact and transformed it into a universally applicable affirmation of radical impossibility. Paul does not assert this radical impossibility that Brunner deduces from his statements. Paul contents himself with a general constatation of a general fact: the pagans have suppressed the knowledge of God received from the revelation in creation and have turned to idols. He does not say that they could not have done otherwise.

Such a step beyond Paul's statement of fact is all the more unjustified when it is remembered that "Paul's method consists in making use of massive affirmations" which intend to give a general picture without descending to the particular cases of individuals. This can never be forgotten "if we do not wish to risk deforming his thought."[26] Therefore, it would appear that Brunner's denial of the *possibility* of a correct, valid natural knowledge of God cannot claim as its basis Rom. 1:19ff. Paul does not teach there that the pagans *necessarily*

[24]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 66.

[25]Brunner, *Dogmatik* I, 138.

[26]André Feuillet, "La connaissance naturelle de Dieu d'après Romains, I, 18-23," *Lumière et vie* 14 (1954), 65 (author's own translation).

perverted the knowledge of God received from the primal revelation. He simply affirms that they have done so as a group.

Ultimately, however, the basis for Brunner's insistence on the radical impossibility of natural man to attain a true knowledge of God from creation is not to be found in Rom. 1:19ff., but in the postulate of the radical corruption of man by sin and in the dogma of *sola gratia.* Brunner admits as much when he writes:

> If it is false and biblically-theologically impossible to dispute the reality of the revelation in creation, then it is no less false to deny the negative significance of sin for our knowledge of the revelation in creation. Sin does not only change our will, but effects as well a "darkening" of the faculties of knowledge where there is question of the knowledge of God. Therefore, whoever affirms a "natural theology" in the sense of correct, valid knowledge [of God], denies by that very fact the reality of sin, or at least its effects in the sphere of our knowledge of God.[27]

However, it is not the effects of sin in the sphere of our knowledge of God that Catholic tradition denies, but the exaggeration of these very real and crippling effects. Brunner himself admits that sin does not destroy man's intellect. "Sin and faith, false and true relation to God, both presuppose the formal reason, the faculty of thought."[28] But it has disturbed this faculty's functioning in such a way that "the nearer anything lies to that center of existence where the whole of existence, i.e., the relation to God and the being of the person, is involved, all the greater is the disturbance of the knowledge of reason by sin; the farther anything lies from this center, the less influence this source of disturbance exercises...."[29] As a result of sin, therefore, man's "inner eye is not a clear mirror, in which God's revelation in creation mirrors itself in its truth, but an eye clouded by sinful anguish and sinful pride,

[27]Brunner, *Dogmatik* I, 138.

[28]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 378.

[29]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 378.

sinful optimism and sinful pessimism."[30] All of these statements are echoed as well in the writings of Catholic theologians. But there is nothing in them which should force Brunner to conclude that a true natural knowledge of God is impossible for man with a radical impossibility. The "moral impossibility" of the Catholic tradition appears to be a better interpretation of the facts.

There can be no doubt that Paul's affirmations imply that without the revelation in Christ it is extremely difficult or morally impossible for sinful man to arrive at a true knowledge of God from the sole revelation in creation. For this reason, the First Vatican Council affirmed that it is due to the revelation in Christ that the divine realities which are not in themselves inaccessible to human reason can be known by all without difficulty, with firm certitude, and without mixture of error.[31] Catholic theology, therefore, while defending the radical possibility of a natural knowledge of God from creation, has always insisted as well that this radical power of knowing God is in fact exercised in a correct manner by sinful humanity only with the greatest difficulty except in dependence upon the Christian revelation. Pius XII formally explained that this difficulty springs from the sinful condition of humanity:

> However, there are many obstacles hindering this same reason from using its natural power [of knowing God] efficaciously and with profit; for the truths which concern God and the relations which exist between God and man absolutely transcend the order of sensible things; and since they impel to action and influence life, they demand self-dedication and self-renunciation. In acquiring such truths, the intellect of man suffers many difficulties because of the senses and imagination and because of evil desires born of original sin.[32]

The primary interest of this passage is to show that the knowledge

[30]Emil Brunner, *Dogmatik* II (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1950), 28 (all translations from this source are the author's own).

[31]Denzinger-Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion symbolorum*, 32nd ed. (Freiburg: Herder, 1963), 3005 (all translations from this source are the author's own).

[32]Denzinger-Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion symbolorum*, 3875.

of God is a special kind of knowledge which can only be accomplished in an acknowledgment of God in one's life and in self-surrender, and that it therefore labors under difficulties of a unique order, which do not spring primarily from weakness of intellect, but from a spiritual disorder which makes us instinctive rebels against God and distorters of the truth. "For in this order of reality men willingly persuade themselves that what they do not wish to be true is false or at least doubtful." Pius XII concludes from this condition of sinful man that the revelation in Christ was morally necessary for all men to know God easily, with certitude, and without error.[33]

Therefore, in affirming the radical possibility of a correct natural knowledge of God, the Catholic theologian does not "deny by that very fact the reality of sin, or at least its effects in the sphere of our knowledge of God," as Brunner believes.[34] In fact, some Catholic theologians, in the tradition of Augustine and Bonaventure, insist that the natural powers of man wounded by original sin can only be activated, even in the natural sphere, when they have been purified through faith in the revelation of Christ and the grace of Christ.[35] But when the Catholic theologian affirms the radical possibility of a natural knowledge of God even for sinful man, he is not necessarily affirming that this possibility was ever activated in history independently of grace. What he is affirming is that "the faith in the God of the Bible is not an arbitrary act, that when we confess 'God revealed Himself in Jesus Christ', the word 'God' has a meaning *for us*, and that the moment we confess as certain the reality of this God, this certitude is founded according to the exigencies of our reason and with respect to our human consciousness."[36] In other words, the possibility of the natural knowledge of God is the transcendental condition of the

[33]Denzinger-Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion symbolorum*, 3876.

[34]Brunner, *Dogmatik* I, 138.

[35]Michael Schmaus, *Katholische Dogmatik* I, 6th ed. (Munich: Hueber, 1960), 219.

[36]Bouillard, *Karl Barth* III, 111.

knowledge of faith. "The knowledge of faith demands and implies, as its transcendental condition, a natural knowledge of God, a knowledge proper to man, which most often remains implicit, but is susceptible of rational explicitation."[37]

The foundation of this assertion can be expressed in the words of J. Maréchal: "All knowledge being an immanent operation, the conditions which proximately determine for the consciousness of the subject the objective or subjective value of his knowledge ought to be found in the subject himself. Those conditions which would remain totally extrinsic to the subject would be nonexistent as far as the consciousness of the subject is concerned. An object is known according to the mode and extent of its 'interiority' in the subject."[38]

Thus, the possibility of a knowledge of God in faith demands and implies a double condition: (1) the revelation and grace of Jesus Christ, and (2) the natural ability of the human reason to know God. The first conditions faith as event; the second is the transcendental condition of faith as *meaning*, and as meaning *for us*.[39] If *we* are to know God in faith, we must admit the possibility of a natural knowledge of God which is actuated in faith. This possibility of a natural knowledge of God constitutes the subjective foundation of the Christian faith as the transcendental condition of the knowledge of faith. This knowledge need not precede faith, but it is necessarily implied as a rational condition of the knowledge of faith. Nor is this knowledge an idol. It is the internal condition by means of which man can discern the God of the Bible from idols, and acknowledge Him without making Him an idol.[40]

Since this is the point of the Catholic theologian's affirmation of

[37]Bouillard, *Karl Barth* III, 138.

[38]Joseph Maréchal, *Le point de départ de la métaphysique* V (Louvain-Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1926), 254 (author's own translation).

[39]Bouillard, *Karl Barth* III, 103.

[40]Bouillard, *Karl Barth* III, 112.

the possibility of a true natural knowledge of God, many of Brunner's objections become pointless. Brunner appeals to the fact that no pagan philosopher ever attained a knowledge of the living God. He points to the fact that even the god of theism, "which is the closest approximation of the biblical creator that reason left to itself is capable of,"[41] is not the living God of the Bible. He emphasizes the fact that the historical forms of the natural knowledge of God in non-Christian religions and philosophies are an ambiguous phenomenon in which can be discovered at the same time an idea of the true God and its perversion.[42] These observations do not touch the position of the Catholic theologian.

Catholic theology, moreover, is far from granting validity to all the historical phenomena which presented themselves in the course of history as natural theology or natural knowledge of God. "It professes that man is a sinner, that the discovery of God is always under a certain aspect a conversion, and that man is always in danger of lowering God to his own level and of not seeing in Him more than a magnified replica of himself or the ideal sum of his own possibilities."[43] But it does insist that the knowledge of God in faith demands and implies, as its transcendental condition, a natural knowledge of God, a knowledge immanent to man, which most often remains implicit, but which is capable of rational explicitation.[44]

This does not mean that in the process by which man comes to believe in the Christian faith a natural knowledge of God must chronologically precede the knowledge of faith. In this respect, Brunner's critique of certain Catholic theologians who distinguish nature and grace, reason and revelation, like a first story and second story of a building, and who clearly separate them by a horizontal, is

[41]Brunner, *Dogmatik* I, 161.

[42]Brunner, *Dogmatik* I, 139.

[43]Bouillard, *Karl Barth* III, 103.

[44]Henri Bouillard, "Le refus de la théologie naturelle dans la théologie protestante contemporaine," in *L' Existence de Dieu* (Tournai: Casterman, 1961), 107.

completely justified.[45] But it means that at least the knowledge of faith implies and contains the rational element of the natural knowledge of God. Naturally, this latter need not be explicitated; it is not required that we possess a reflex consciousness of it, nor is it necessary for it to have been systematized in the form of organized, rational knowledge.[46] But it is essential that this original, implicit seizure of God by the intellect be present and that its explicitation be possible, otherwise "we would possess no basis for judging the validity of the recognition of a divine revelation in history; nothing would authorize us to affirm that the God of the Bible is our God."[47]

Therefore, the Catholic tradition does not impose the recognition of one or other of the historical forms of natural theology as the true and valid natural knowledge of God. It can even admit with Brunner that its explicit historical forms in non-Christian religions and philosophies have frequently been "idolatrous shadows of the true God."[48] What it does defend is the principle that a natural knowledge of God is a possibility, as the transcendental condition of the Christian faith itself, as the a priori, unformulated knowledge which is exercised in the knowledge of faith itself, and without which it would be impossible to recognize the God of biblical revelation and faith as our God.

Furthermore, Saint Paul himself in his letter to the Romans invites us to admit the actual existence of a knowledge of God even outside explicit Christian faith, even at the interior of idolatry. What else does Brunner himself admit when he maintains that Paul in his letter to the Romans preaches that the pagans are without excuse for their idolatry because they actually possess a "certain" knowledge of God, or when he says that "the natural 'knowledge' of God is always an inextricable

[45]Brunner, *Natur und Gnade*, 33.

[46]L. Malevez, "Le croyant et le philosophe," *Nouvelle revue théologique* 82 (1960), 911-912.

[47]Bouillard, *Karl Barth* III, 102.

[48]Brunner, *Natur und Gnade*, 46.

mixture of true knowledge and deification of creatures"?[49] What else can this "certain" knowledge and this "true" knowledge which makes man culpable be, than what Catholic theology calls the implicit and spontaneous seizure of God from which spring and originate the historical concepts of god, no matter how perverted and inadequate they may be?

What enables Brunner to give an apparent reasonableness to his insistence on the absolute impossibility for man to acquire a true and valid natural knowledge of God is his excessively exigent definition of "true and valid" knowledge of God. For Brunner, a true knowledge of God must be a knowledge of God as the living, personal, holy, and merciful Lord and Father precisely as manifested in the Christian revelation. Furthermore, it must be a knowledge which is the abolition of sin.[50] But this is to demand not merely a true knowledge, but a more perfect and complete knowledge. There is here an apparent identification of incomplete knowledge and untrue knowledge. Naturally, there is a vast difference between the knowledge of God resulting from faith in Jesus Christ, and the knowledge of God that can be attained from the primal revelation in and through the created world. The latter tells man nothing of the interior of the triune God, of His definitive attitude toward sinful man, of His redeeming love and mercy. It does not give man a knowledge of the self-communicating Thou of the Bible who enters into personal communion with man in his history. "Although in the two cases there is question of the same God ... we do not know Him under the same aspect, for we do not know Him in each case by the same process, nor in the same light."[51] What is more, "the God of faith, in His very Being, transports us infinitely

[49]Brunner, *Dogmatik* II, 28.

[50]Brunner, *Natur und Gnade*, 19.

[51]Maurice Corvez, "Foi en Dieu et connaissance naturelle de l'existence de Dieu," *Lumière et vie* 14 (1954), 18 (all translations from this source are the author's own). Cf. Henri D. Robert, "Connaissance et inconnaissance de Dieu, au plan de la raison," in *L'Existence de Dieu*, 339-342.

above the God of reason."[52] Compared with the knowledge of faith, the knowledge attainable as the result of the revelation in creation appears superficial. Above all else, reason alone cannot establish a friendship between God and man, nor does its light involve vital communion,[53] and yet, though the knowledge of God possible from creation will always remain inadequate (as, however, is all our knowledge of God), it is nevertheless correct, valid, and true. It reflects something of the reality—though weakly and inadequately. "Since we are not able to think of God as He is, we follow the course, as wise as it is humble ... of thinking of Him as we are. We qualify Him according to our relations with Him; and as these relations are real, we say what is true, although as a definition it may be insufficient to the point of being none at all."[54] But though it is a humble knowledge, it is a true knowledge, because "a thought more profound inspires this course of action, because a light more mysterious illumines this knowledge."[55]

Brunner further postulates that "the God who is known from the world is always only the Demiurge, the ground of the world, the 'necessary nature'."[56] He insists with Luther that "abstract-speculative thought by means of the analogy of being and the idea of truth does not lead to the true God, but into the *merae tenebrae rationis.*"[57] Against Bonaventure, he writes that "the ascent of the soul to God is a road that leads nowhere; the *itinerarium mentis in Deum* does not lead to the living

[52]Corvez, "Foi en Dieu et connaissance naturelle de l'existence de Dieu," 18-19.

[53]Corvez, "Foi en Dieu et connaissance naturelle de l'existence de Dieu," 20.

[54]Antonin Sertillanges, in (St. Thomas') *Somme théologique: Dieu* III (Paris: Desclée, 1925), 343 (author's own translation).

[55]Henri de Lubac, *Sur les chemins de Dieu* (Paris: Aubier, 1956), 112 (all translations from this source are the author's own).

[56]Brunner, *Der Mittler*, 237.

[57]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 315.

God, but to the abstract *ens realissimum* of Neoplatonic speculation."[58] The reason for this is that sin has perverted man's reason, and in this context this perversion is, more exactly, abstraction. The God found in this way has nothing to do with the God of the Bible. He stands in the relation of either-or to Him.[59] It is interesting to note that the first quotation of this paragraph, taken from *Der Mittler*, was supported by an appeal to Kant.[60] Though in his more recent writings Brunner appeals to the fact of sin and not to Kant as the basis for similar statements, one wonders how much the Kantian analysis is still unconsciously at the base of Brunner's opposition to the validity of a natural knowledge of God from creation and his insistence upon the radical difference and opposition between the God of reason and the God of revelation.

Brunner appears to take it for granted that any natural knowledge of God from reason proceeds from man's initiative alone, whereas in fact man is always merely the one who reacts to the manifestation of Himself initiated by God in creation. For this reason, natural knowledge of God need not be regarded as an autonomous attempt by man's reason to construct for itself and by itself a knowledge of God, nor must it necessarily result in an impersonal abstraction. It can be the recognition of the personal God who makes signs to me through His creation.

> For it is not my spirit which makes the first step to raise itself to God from the world; it is God who by the world descends in a certain manner to my spirit. No matter how spontaneous it may be, the proof that I fashion for myself only comes as the second element. However active it may be, it is only a reaction. Whereas the proof is fabricated by me, the sign which precedes it and already contains it, which authorizes it and provokes it, which sets it in motion and which always surpasses it, is made to me by another. In all truth, *Dieu me fait signe.*[61]

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[58]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 315.

[59]Brunner, *Dogmatik* I, 160.

[60]Brunner, *Der Mittler*, 237, note 1.

[61]de Lubac, *Sur les chemins de Dieu*, 109. Cf. Robert, "Connaissance et inconnaissance de Dieu, au plan de la raison," 349ff.

The knowledge that results from the encounter with such a sign is not an abstraction, but the concrete apprehension of God; at least, it can be.

If, in fact, men have found only an impersonal abstraction, merely a first mover, this is due, no doubt, to the effects of sin on man's reason and will, but it was not and is not impossible for man to do otherwise. The God found by man's intellect in reaction to the revelation in creation need not necessarily stand in a relation of either-or to the God of the Bible. For if it is true, as E. Gilson admits,[62] that the prime mover is not Jahweh, still Jahweh is the prime mover. The knowledge of Him from creation may be obscure and woefully incomplete in comparison with what God has revealed of Himself in Jesus Christ, or even in comparison with what God has actually revealed of Himself in creation, for Saint Thomas agrees that our intellect has been so weakened that it cannot receive everything that creatures manifest about God.[63] Furthermore, the God of faith infinitely transcends the God whose existence the philosopher proves. Nonetheless, this knowledge "is, in its origin, completely concrete, even when it follows the path of logic and abstraction, because it is that of a *presence.*"[64] For this reason, Brunner's disdain for the knowledge of God which results from the reaction of man's intellect to God's revelation of Himself in creation proceeds in part from a misunderstanding of the true nature of this type of knowledge.

If, in its natural knowledge of God, man's intellect alone took all the initiative, what Brunner says might be true, for he is correct in insisting that "the true God can only be known in His descent to us."[65] But that descent cannot be limited to the revelation in Christ

[62]Etienne Gilson, *Introduction à la philosophie chrétienne* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1960), 22.

[63]Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate* 5, a. 2, ad 2m.

[64]de Lubac, *Sur les chemins de Dieu*, 110.

[65]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 315.

alone.[66] There can be no doubt that "the reasoning process to which I would not be provoked, which would not result from a stimulation and from an essential impulsion, would only give me a knowledge that was totally indirect and completely abstract. It would only furnish me with a pure concept that took the place of a being that was *absent*—or rather of a thing that was absent."[67] But this is not the case. God is present, revealing Himself to man's reason, in creation, and therefore, in fact, "under the abstraction that comes from me, the true God reveals Himself as present."[68]

Consequently, Brunner's insight remains true: "The true God can only be known in His descent to us."[69] But this descent occurred not merely in the revelation in Christ, but in the revelation in creation as well, and, as Brunner also teaches, this revelation is not merely a thing of the past, but is continually present to every man. It remains true that *Gottes Wesen ist Offenbarungswesen*,[70] which can only be known through revelation and in revelation.[71]

Therefore, the final word must be: "Idea of the Good, the First Mover, the Necessary Being, One Superior to being, Universal Principle, Deity without form or name—God of the Patriarchs, God of Moses and Isaiah, Sovereign Master, Awe-inspiring Judge, King of History, Father of Jesus ... from the one to the other there extends an abyss; and yet it is, or at least it can be, the same God."[72]

In this "at least, it can be" lies the difference between Brunner

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[66]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 315.

[67]de Lubac, *Sur les chemins de Dieu*, 110.

[68]de Lubac, *Sur les chemins de Dieu*, 110.

[69]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 315.

[70]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 383.

[71]Brunner, *Dogmatik* I, 201.

[72]de Lubac, *Sur les chemins de Dieu*, 137.

and the Catholic theologian. The latter insists on this "at least, it can be," because the negation of the possibility for the human reason in reaction to the revelation in creation to arrive at a true and valid natural knowledge of God logically leads to skepticism in the domain of religion. If human reason cannot naturally know God without revelation in Christ, how can it know God even with the revelation in Christ? For within the very act of faith itself, the human intellect is called upon to exercise its natural function of knowing God. As we have seen, "the knowledge of faith requires and implies, as its transcendental condition, a natural knowledge of God, a knowledge proper to man, which remains implicit most often, but which is susceptible of rational explicitation."[73]

Could Brunner admit this? Despite his castigation of a sinful autonomy of human reason, which places itself in the place of God, i.e., the arrogant and self-sufficient reason of rationalism,[74] he also insists that God's revelation must be received by our reason, that "the Word of God is *logos*, meaning, that is to be understood by us, i.e., to be received as an object of thought, and therefore not produced by our thinking but received."[75] "Our *nous* is, therefore, the container, but not the source, of the Word of God."[76] "Assuredly, revelation and faith do not take place outside of the [faculty of] thought (*ausserhalb des Denkens*), but in the [faculty of] thought (*am Denken*), and of this work of God in our [faculty of] thought (*an unserem Denken*) our thought can bear witness."[77] "Therefore, faith does not, as it were, withdraw reason from circulation, but through faith the Word of God takes man's reason into its service. Rational thought is not disposed of—for

[73]Bouillard, *Karl Barth* III, 138.

[74]Brunner, *Der Mensch im Widerspruch*, 246.

[75]Brunner, *Der Mensch im Widerspruch*, 246.

[76]Brunner, *Der Mensch im Widerspruch*, 246.

[77]Emil Brunner, *Gott und Mensch* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1930), 22-23 (author's own translation).

faith itself is the genuine rational thought about God and about life as a whole—but only the misuse of thought, the delusion of reason. Reason is not destroyed by faith but liberated."[78]

Thus, for Brunner, in faith reason abdicates a sinful autonomy by which it shuts itself up within itself and thus closes itself off from the truth God seeks to give it. This abdication is penance (*Busse*), which itself only takes place through an act of reason in which reason relinquishes its false autonomy. Sinful reason can only accomplish this "because it is overpowered by the Word of God; but this overpowering occurs in an act of reason, in a *meta-noia*, a change of thinking (*Umdenken*) concerning ourselves and God, in an *understanding* of that which God says to us. The 'I' expresses this because it is forced to do so by the truth of the Word of God."[79]

Brunner, therefore, would seem to be able to agree with the Catholic theologian when he writes:

> Certainly, the subject who receives the revelation opens himself to a truth which is grace, and which does not come from him; but it is *he* who opens himself to this truth and recognizes it as such. The autonomy of the *Cogito* changes itself into receptivity; but it is it which converts itself, and it does not dissolve in the act which issues from it. That which is abolished is a certain determination of the empirical 'I', which shuts itself to the revelation at first, but not the autonomy of the *Cogito*, understood as the originating 'I' or as the transcendental subject.[80]

For Brunner, too, it would seem to be true that "the conscience remains judge of all truth, even when it bows before the last instance, which is the authority of the divine revelation."[81]

When Brunner says that in faith in the revelation "the autonomy

[78]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 424.

[79]Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 426.

[80]Bouillard, *Karl Barth* III, 139.

[81]Bouillard, *Karl Barth* III, 139.

of the *Cogito, ergo sum* is abolished, the last instance of truth is no longer the 'I', but the divine 'Thou',"[82] he means the false autonomy resulting from sin which refuses a priori to even consider the claims of any truth that comes from outside itself, because sinful man "wants to be God Himself," and "will suffer no other God except the one who is identical with the deepest ground of the 'I'."[83] But it does not appear that he would deny that it is the liberated reason of man which recognizes that God's truth is *the* truth.

If this is true, it would appear to be logically difficult for Brunner to deny the reality which Catholic theology calls the natural knowledge of God implied in the knowledge of faith. He should be able to recognize that "with the Christian himself in whom it terminates, the knowledge of God by His manifestation in creatures possesses a properly rational character; that even if its accomplishment has been instigated from the exterior, *il est porté par une genèse rationnelle autonome*, and that this defines, in the eyes of man, the truth of this knowledge."[84] This would seem to be implied in Brunner's teaching that "If it happens that the inner eye of man is truly enlightened by the Word of God, then it is also enlightened to perceive the divine revelation in creation as it is,"[85] especially since the enlightenment comes to remove the sinful effects which make the inner eye of man an unfaithful mirror of the revelation in creation.[86]

Actually, it is very difficult for Brunner to maintain a mediating position between Barth and Catholic theology. Once he has admitted an objective revelation in creation to which corresponds in man a subjective capacity to know it, and once he adds to this that despite

[82]Brunner, *Dogmatik* I, 132.

[83]Brunner, *Dogmatik* I, 133.

[84]Bouillard, *Karl Barth* III, 138.

[85]Brunner, *Dogmatik* II, 29.

[86]Brunner, *Dogmatik* II, 28; idem, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 425-426.

sin man actually knows enough about God to make his idolatry inexcusable, i.e., to make him responsible, it would seem that he has already admitted with Saint Paul the possibility and the actuality of a natural knowledge of God. When he denies that this is a true and valid knowledge of God, the reader can only ask: How can a knowledge which makes man inexcusable not be a true and valid knowledge? Perhaps it is not an adequate knowledge of God's Name, for it is true that this is only given in the historical revelation in Jesus Christ. Certainly, it is not a saving knowledge which removes sin and brings communion with God, for that too can only be given, after man's fall, by the revelation in Jesus Christ. But if the knowledge makes man inexcusable for his sin, it must be true.

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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE CONSTITUTION ON DIVINE REVELATION

Joseph J. Smith, S.J.

The formation and discussion of the dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation extended through all four years of the Second Vatican Council. Its main themes, Revelation—Scripture—Tradition, are foundation realities of the Church and the Church's life in the world. The revelation event in Christ created the Church as the community of faith in which it would remain present as reality and truth through Scripture and Tradition. But the Council debates made it clear that reflection on these basic realities of the Church's life and on their relation to one another had not attained the maturity required for easy formulation. Differences of opinion on these matters were sharp and ran deep. But after four drafts, a final text emerged which represents a significant development of Catholic teaching and opens up ecumenical perspectives for which the first draft proposed to the Council gave little hope.

PART I: THE PREPARATION OF THE TEXT

Session I: 1962. The original schema presented for discussion at the first session in the fall of 1962 was entitled "On the Sources of Revelation." It had been prepared by the Theological Commission under the presidency of Cardinal Ottaviani. Unfortunately, this

commission had refused the help offered by the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, which had been studying the relations between Revelation, Scripture and Tradition in a broader perspective than that of the Theological Commission.[1] Written in the style of Trent and Vatican I, and orientated toward the refutation of errors, the schema met strong opposition from some of the most prominent Cardinals at the Council. The adversaries of the draft objected to three points in particular.[2]

The first objection concerned theological formulation. The schema tended to conceive revelation primarily as the communication of conceptual truths rather than as the luminous action and presence of God in events of history at the interior of which the word provides the necessary commentary and explication. Furthermore, the critics of the schema objected to the terminology "two sources of revelation," affirming that there is only one source of revelation and that this revelation is transmitted in the church through the mutually related channels of Scripture and Tradition. Scripture as the crystallization of the primitive oral tradition under the influence of the Holy Spirit is *par excellence* "canon" of the faith and norm for the formulations of the magisterium. The Council should formulate this correlation in such a way that Protestants might be able to understand that the magisterium of the Church, whose importance should not be minimized, is not above Scripture, but rather serves the function of interpreting Scripture authentically, in function of the totality of the tradition.

The second objection centered on the tendency of the schema to definitively settle points still controverted among theologians and thus to deepen the differences between Catholics and Protestants. For example, the schema asserted (in a formulation that went beyond Trent): "Tradition, indeed, and this alone, is the way by which the

[1]Johannes Feiner, "La contribution du Secrétariat pour l'Unité des Chrétiens á la constitution dogmatique sur la révélation divine," in *La Révélation Divine* I, ed. Bernard D. Dupuy (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1968), 119-124.

[2]Robert Rouquette, "Bilan du Concil," *Études* 316 (1963), 94-111.

Church can clearly know a number of revealed truths...."[3] Since many Catholics denied that there are some revealed truths ascertainable by Tradition alone, apart from Scripture, the critics of the schema insisted that in line with the practice of previous Councils, such controverted questions should not be settled by the Council.

On many other delicate points, the schema presented massive affirmations, devoid of nuances, which canonized the position of a particular theological school within the Church concerning the nature of inspiration, the inerrancy of Scripture in profane matters, the precise nature of the historicity of the Gospels, the identity of the authors of the Gospels, and the genuinity of the words attributed to Christ in the Gospels. Biblical scholars described the schema as a step backward of fifty years and a silent burial of Pius XII's encyclical on Scripture (*Divino Afflante Spiritu*).[4] If this schema were approved by the Council, the work of exegetes and theologians would be severely hampered and collaboration with other Christian scholars would be made difficult, if not impossible.

The third objection of the opponents of the schema concerned its lack of conformity with the ecumenical spirit which animated John XXIII and which according to his desire should inspire the entire Council. In an important intervention on November 19, Bishop De Smedt of Bruges, who spoke on behalf of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, recalled that ecumenical dialogue involves not only concern for truth, but also concern for presenting the truth in a way that may make it comprehensible to others. Both sides must explain their faith clearly, objectively, and in a way that is psychologically acceptable and without engaging in controversy. The Holy Father wished this method to be applied to the Council documents. But in the judgment of the Secretariat, the proposed schema possessed "grave faults from an ecumenical point of view; it would not encourage a dialogue with

[3]Schema I, caput 1, *Documenta Concilii Vaticani* II: *De Divina Revelatione*, 3 (hereafter cited as *Documenta*), all translations from this source are the author's own.

[4]Pierre Grelot, "La Constitution sur la Révélation," *Études* 324 (1966), 101 (all translations from this source are the author's own).

non-Catholics; it would not represent progress, but a retreat." "If the schema prepared by the Theological Commission is not modified," he emphasized, "we shall be responsible for causing Vatican Council II to destroy a great, and immense hope ... for ... the unity of those for whom Christ Our Lord offered this prayer: *ut unum sint.*"[5]

This judgement is reflected in the initial reactions of Protestant observers to the schema. A. Outler later commented: "I can still recall the thud of my heart when I first read the first text of that schema, originally drafted by the theological commission—and the anguish of Lukas Vischer when he wrote of it as 'worse than Trent'."[6]

On November 20, a vote was taken to determine whether the existing schema should be discussed chapter by chapter or withdrawn for total redrafting. One thousand three hundred sixty eight voted to reject the schema; eight hundred twenty-two voted to continue the discussion chapter by chapter. Since this meant that the required two-thirds majority had not been attained, the minority would have imposed continued discussion on the majority. But on November 21, Pope John XXIII intervened, ratified the opinion of the majority, and sent the schema to a newly-formed mixed commission, as suggested by a number of bishops, for complete redrafting. He indicated that the new draft should be pastoral in tone, ecumenical in spirit and free from binding declarations on matters still under discussion among Catholics.

Oscar Cullmann observed that this date decided the orientation of the whole Council.[7] At a conference in Rome in 1963, Yves Congar declared: "The date of Nov. 20, 1962 will be remembered in the

[5]For a report on this speech, cf. Xavier Rynne, *Letters from Vatican City* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Co., 1963), 161-163.

[6]Albert Outler, "Scripture, Tradition and Ecumenism," in *Scripture and Ecumenism*, ed. Leonard Swidler (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1965), 18-19.

[7]Oscar Cullmann, "Entre deux sessions du Concile; Experiences et espérances d'un observateur protestant," *La Documentation Catholique* 60 (1963), col. 483.

history of the Church as marking the definitive closure of the Counter-Reform, since by a majority vote, the Fathers of the Council on that day rejected a document on the sources of revelation which was not sufficiently ecumenical and too greatly inspired by an anti-Protestant Catholicism."[8] The great majority of the universal episcopate clearly manifested that it refused to take a position of pure defense against error, that it judged that there was no heresy facing the Church, that it wished to allow exegetes a healthy liberty of research, that it wished to speak a pastoral language intelligible to men of today, and that it wished to engage in a true dialogue with non-Catholics.

Session II: 1963. The new commission was placed under the joint presidency of Cardinal Ottaviani of the Theological Commission and Cardinal Bea of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. Avery Dulles notes that the inclusion of Cardinal Bea and his Secretariat in the drafting of the new schema on Revelation indicates the great ecumenical importance which Pope John XXIII attached to the Constitution.[9]

However, the new mixed commission could not produce the results that were desired. It did not include among its members any exegete with a world-wide reputation. Father Yves Congar, who had just finished a comprehensive historical and theological study of Tradition,[10] was not called to participate in the first phase of the work, though he was admitted to the commission later on. René Laurentin reports that under these conditions the commission could only arrive at a dull compromise. The commission did not rework the entire draft and give it a new theological approach. Its work consisted in deleting apparent deficiencies from the first draft. "Neither of the two

[8] *La Documentation Catholique* 61 (1964), col. 1393, note 2 (all translations from this source are the author's own).

[9] Avery Dulles, "The Constitution on Divine Revelation in Ecumenical Perspective," *American Ecclesiastical Review* 154 (1966), 219.

[10] Yves Congar, *La Tradition et les Traditions: Essai Historique* (Paris: Fayard, 1960); idem, *La Tradition et Les Traditions: Essai Théologique* (Paris: Fayard, 1963).

tendencies was satisfied, at least on the first Chapter: the one which posed the famous question of the 'two sources', and of the relation between Scripture and Tradition."[11]

This second draft was entitled "On Divine Revelation" instead of "The Sources of Revelation." Like the first draft it had five chapters, but an entirely new prologue was added. "Although the quotation at the beginning from the First Epistle of John (1:2-3) suggests that revelation is the communion creating self-disclosure of God, the further explanation shows that the old restrictive concept of revelation, namely, revelation as doctrine, is still presupposed."[12]

Chapter 1 was entitled "The Revealed Word of God" instead of "The Twofold Source of Revelation." Following Trent, the Gospel was affirmed to be the "one source of all salutary truth and discipline of life." No expression or formula was used which favored the "two source theory" (the existence of constitutive Tradition was neither affirmed nor denied). But as Congar pointed out, the text was only "negatively good." A text was needed which would be "positively good." It lacked a description of tradition which would make clear what is original and proper to this mode of the transmission of the truth of revelation, even when it hands on the same realities to which Scripture witnesses in its own manner. However, the text did emphasize the close relationship and inner connection between Scripture and Tradition.

Chapter 2 was entitled "The Divine Inspiration and Interpretation of Sacred Scripture." It briefly affirmed the fact of the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. God is the principal author who makes use of men as living instruments to transmit in writing all that He wills and only what He wills. Since God is the principal author, the inspired Scripture is "free from all error whatever" (*ab omni prorsus errore immunis*).

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[11]René Laurentin, *Bilan de la Troisième Session* (Paris: Editions du Sevil, 1965), 90 (author's own translation).

[12]Gregory Baum, "Vatican II's Constitution on Revelation, History and Interpretation," *Theological Studies* 28 (1967), 56.

There was no longer any explicit affirmation that divine inspiration "excludes any error in what ever matter, whether religious or profane," as in the first schema.

Chapter 3 of the second draft, like Chapter 3 of the first draft, was entitled "The Old Testament." Here for the first time was to be found that deepened conception of revelation which would be developed in the later drafts in a special first chapter. Revelation was no longer approached from the viewpoint of teaching. Corresponding with the concrete history of salvation in the Old Testament, God was said to have revealed himself through words and deeds in such a way that Israel experienced the divine ways with men, and through the prophetic Word of God grew in their understanding of this experience. Gregory Baum noted that this shift from a concept of revelation as teaching to the conception of revelation as personal self-communication in history "represents the important turning point in the development of the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation."[13]

Chapter 4 also retained the same title as in the first schema: "The New Testament." The question of the historicity of the Gospels was approached differently; their general historicity was affirmed. The Gospels transmit what Jesus did and taught for the salvation of men, even though their standards of historical composition were not the same as those of our day, and even though they were often reported in a kerygmatic form. But the condemnation of errors concerning the historical nature of the Gospels, which had made up a large portion of the chapter in the first draft, was eliminated.

Chapter 5, "The Use of the Bible in the Church," was a positive statement which, especially in the first paragraph, betrayed the influence of the schema "On the Word of God" prepared by the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. In Scripture, God encounters His children and speaks with them. God is active in His Word in the Church, strengthening the Church and the faith of Christians. Scripture is the Word of God and does not only contain it as does Tradition.

[13]Baum, "Vatican II's Constitution on Revelation, History and Interpretation," 57.

This revised schema was distributed to the Fathers of the Council, but was not submitted for debate at the second session. The draft did not appear to capture the enthusiasm of the Bishops; some hoped that the schema would be given a silent burial, while some French and Italian Bishops sought to win support for the project of incorporating the main themes of the draft into the Constitution on the Church. Furthermore, the long debates on Collegiality did not leave time for a serious discussion of the schema on Revelation in the last days of the session. But in his discourse closing the second session on December 4, 1963, Paul VI indicated that the question of Revelation would be taken up at the third session. In the meantime, the Fathers were requested to submit their observations on the second draft in writing.

Session III: 1964. By April 1964, almost two hundred eighty observations were received from the Fathers of the Council. In general, they approved the substance of the second draft, but most demanded that the chapter on Tradition be redone, and many asked that the schema begin with a special chapter on Revelation. It seemed that such revision should be carried out in a much broader perspective.

The Theological Commission set to work to rewrite the schema on the basis of the new proposals. On March 7, a special subcommission was constituted with Bishop Charue of Namur as President.[14]

[14]This subcommission of seven Fathers and nineteen experts was itself divided into two sections. The first section, comprising Bishop Florit as President and Bishop J. Heuschen and Abbot Butler, examined the chapters concerning Revelation and Tradition. The experts assisting them were: H. Schauf, A. Prignon, C. Moeller, K. Rahner, P. Smulders, Y. Congar, U. Betti, S. Tromp, A. Ramirez, and J. van den Bynde. The second section, comprising Bishop Charue and Bishop Dodewaard, examined the chapters treating of Scripture. The experts assisting them were: L. Cerfaux, S. Garafalo, J. Turrado, B. Rigaux, R. Gagnebert, O. Semmelroth, and A. Grillmeier.

The mixed commission left the revision of the schema to the Theological Commission, but the revision was to be made according to the principles fixed in 1963. The result of the revision was to be submitted to Cardinal Bea. (Bernard D. Dupuy, "Historique de la Constitution," in Dupuy, *La Révélation Divine* I, 93.)

The work this time was serious, open, scientific, and constructive. The opinions of the theological tendencies were transcended. The essential was disengaged and dialogue opened the way for a real adjustment between the two tendencies. After the necessary preparatory work by the *periti*, the subcommission met between April 20 to 25 and worked out a new text which represented an entirely new approach to the subject. The Theological Commission studied this schema from July 1 to 5 and agreement was easily reached on all but one point. A minority of seven maintained that an addition should be made explicitly stating that Tradition is wider (*latius patet*) than Scripture, that some truths of faith are not known with certitude except through Tradition. The majority of seventeen vetoed this proposal, but they agreed that in presenting the schema to the Council a minority report on this controverted point should be given. However, the final text of the Constitution on Revelation would not be very much different from this third draft approved by the Theological Commission.

Max Thurian, sub-prior of the Protestant community of Taizé and guest of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, declared: "The present schema represents the best possible accord between the different theological schools concerning the problems of Revelation, Scripture and Tradition.... Such as it is today, the conciliar text offers a solid basis for the ecumenical dialogue. It nourishes our profound optimism concerning the fruits of the Council for the visible unity of Christians."[15]

This rejuvenated schema on divine revelation was introduced to the Council for debate on September 30, 1964. Archbishop Florit explained this third draft of the schema to the Council on behalf of the Theological Commission, and Bishop Franic exposed the reserves of the minority. This third draft consisted of a Prologue and six Chapters, one more than the previous drafts. The Prologue of the second draft was revised and developed as Chapter 1 of the third draft, treating of Revelation in itself. The five Chapters of the second draft followed this

[15] *La Documentation Catholique* 61 (1964), col. 1393-1394, note 3.

in order. Chapter 2 (Chapter 1 in the previous drafts) was given the significantly new title of "The Transmission of Divine Revelation."

The new draft was discussed chapter by chapter until October 6. In general, the new text was favorably received. A minority attempted to reopen the debate concerning the question of the "two sources" and their relative material extent; with Bishop Franic they desired an explicit statement that Tradition contains more truths of faith than Scripture, but conceded that this omission would not be an error but only a "notable defect" in the schema. This attempt, however, was without success. The majority of the Fathers agreed with Archbishop Florit, the spokesman for the majority on the Commission, that this difficult question should be left open for theological investigation.

The debate also brought to light two further "sore points" in the schema. The first concerned the "inerrancy" of Sacred Scripture as explained in Chapter 3. The affirmation that Scripture teaches the truth "without any error" seemed to affirm too much, for it is evident that the sacred books contain certain errors in the modern sense of the term, in matters of physical science, chronology, and conceptions of time. Many Fathers demanded that the inerrancy proper to Scripture be explicitly related to the order of saving truth.

The second neuralgic point concerned the explanation of the historicity of the Gospels as proposed in Chapter 5. Various proposals were made for the improvement of the text.

After the debate, the Theological Commission (i.e., the corresponding sub-commissions) immediately began the work of retouching the text in conformity with the proposals of the Fathers. The corrections were relatively few and homogeneous with the whole tenor of the schema. The fourth modified draft of the schema was redistributed on November 20 in the course of the last general congregation, too late to be voted upon in the third session.

Session IV: 1965. When the fourth session began in September of 1965, one of the first items on the agenda was the fourth revision of the schema on Revelation. From September 20 to 23, it was voted upon paragraph by paragraph, all of which were eventually approved

in general by a two-thirds majority. The schema was then sent back to the Commission for another revision according to the corrections and amendments expressed in the votes *juxta modum.*

In the sessions of the Theological Commission concerning the question of tradition (Ch. 2), the question of inerrancy (Ch. 3), and the question of the historicity of the Gospels (Ch. 5), there was strong resistance from the so-called *Coetus internationalis Patrum*, which numbered between one to two hundred supporters. Due to the document's doctrinal nature, the Pope followed the work of the Commission closely as it was putting the definitive text in final form. He too became particularly uneasy concerning the three points mentioned above: the relation between Scripture and Tradition, the extent of inerrancy and the historicity of the Gospels. When he saw that others were demanding precisions concerning the same points, he sent a letter dated October 18 to the Commission through the Cardinal Secretary of State, proposing three precisions concerning the points enumerated. The Pope did not restrict the liberty of the Commission, but asked that his amendments be examined freely yet with benevolence.[16] The Commission did precisely that. As we shall see, in all three questions the Commission chose formulations which satisfied the basic intention of the Pope, but which did not close any of the doors so many had fought for four long years to hold open.

The fifth and final draft of the schema was submitted to the vote of the Council on October 29. At the last minute the *Coetus internationalis Patrum* tried once again to rally opposition to the constitution, accusing it of modernism. However, they could only muster twenty-seven negative votes. The schema was adopted in its totality by two thousand eighty-one affirmative votes. In the course of the public session of November 18, the final vote which took place just before the promulgation of the constitution was two thousand three hundred fifty in favor and six against.

Naturally, the final text is marked by its long history and bears

[16]R. Rouquette, "La quatrième session du concile," *Études* 323 (1965), 681.

the traces of many compromises. But, as J. Ratzinger notes, the fundamental compromise which underlies it is more than a compromise; it is a synthesis of great significance. "The text unites faithfulness to ecclesial tradition with the affirmation of critical science, and thus opens up for faith the path into the present."[17]

PART II: A COMMENTARY

PROLOGUE

The first two words (*Dei Verbum*) give an exact summary of the object of the Constitution: the Word of God. Right from the beginning, the Council emphasizes that the Church's role in relation to the Word of God is that of obedient listening. All her life, proclamation and activity flow from her openness to this Word. The quotation from the first epistle of John indicates that this Word of God in the concrete is the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, our life. This living Word has been seen and heard and is now present to us in the Church's proclamation in order to establish fellowship and communion between men and between men and God the Father. The whole first chapter on Revelation will be dominated by the themes orchestrated here: Word, life and communion.

The emphasis on the doctrine of the Word of God and the dominance of the Word over the Church makes the ecumenical importance of this constitution evident. The Catholic Church here is attempting to overcome an earlier over-emphasis on institution and sacrament. The affirmation of the prologue that the present Council understands itself to be "*inhaerens vestigiis*" of Trent and of Vatican I in no way nullifies this ecumenical and corrective thrust of the constitution. These words intend to emphasize the continuity of this

[17]Joseph Ratzinger, "Dogmatische Konstitution über die göttliche Offenbarung," in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche: Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil*, Band II (Freiburg: Herder, 1967), 503 (all translations from this source are the author's own).

Council with the previous Councils, but the entire Constitution makes it clear that this continuity is achieved within a reinterpretation which overcomes former insufficiencies. We can agree with K. Barth that in the context of the entire constitution and the directives of John XXIII these two words should be translated as "going forward from the footsteps of those councils," i.e., placing the left foot in the track of those councils and marching forward in the direction indicated by them.[18]

Chapter 1: Revelation Itself

Chapter 1 contains the most complete statement concerning revelation ever given in a document of the magisterium, yet it makes no claim to be a complete treatment of the subject. The chapter aims to present a concrete biblical and salvation-history view of revelation. This limited but important objective is successfully and attractively achieved.

The divine self-revelation is first explained in its nature and meaning (article two). It is then presented as a historical reality which passes from the creation, through the special revelation history of the Old Testament (article three), to Jesus Christ who perfects revelation by fulfilling it (article four). Man receives this revelation in faith (article five). Finally, into this total view of revelation as personal encounter is integrated revelation's role as a communication of truth (article six).

Article 2: Nature and Object of Revelation. Revelation is viewed here dynamically as process or act, not statically as final result or doctrine (as in draft one and draft two). Three points should receive special emphasis:

a) Revelation is God's gratuitous manifestation of Himself and

[18]Karl Barth, "Conciliorum Tridentini et Vaticani I inhaerens vestigiis?" in Dupuy, *La Révélation Divine* II, 514.

the mystery of His will for the purpose of inviting man to personal fellowship with Himself through Christ in the Spirit. The structure of revelation is therefore Trinitarian. Its goal is personal encounter and communion with men. Revelation thus involves more than a communication of truth, although a communication of saving truth is necessarily involved as well.

b) Revelation is historical and sacramental. According to the explanation of Archbishop Florit given to the Council at the third session, "the constitutive elements of revelation are both the deeds wrought by God in salvation history and the words by which God himself wills his work to be explained." Therefore, the revelation is historical "because it consists primarily in all the interventions of God...." It is "sacramental, moreover, because the total significance of the deeds is not known to us except by words, that is, by the 'speech of God' which is itself a historical event."[19] This is the first time that a document of the magisterium has described the concrete structure of the revelation-encounter of God with man. The intimate union of deed and word receives special emphasis. God's salvific actions in history bear a meaning, but frequently the historical event is ambiguous and does not fully manifest its revelatory significance except in the light of a divinely communicated interpretation. Revelation is therefore accomplished through history together with the interpretation of the word. Revelation is not a system of abstract propositions but it does communicate doctrine in the form of events which themselves bear a meaning in relation to God and his saving design which the words illuminate and proclaim. History and doctrine, event and interpretation are complementary and refer to one another. Together they introduce man to Mystery, the reality of God whom the human spirit can never fully grasp, for which human language is never adequate, and who even in his revelation remains veiled in obscurity, always transcending what we can think and say of him.

[19] *Documenta*, 90.

c) The mediator and fullness of this saving revelation through word and deed is Jesus Christ. This will be developed in article four. Christocentric structure and Trinitarian structure complement each other. The Father can only introduce us to the Trinitarian life through His Son in the Spirit. Only then is the goal of revelation achieved: the communication of the saving truth about God and the salvation of man through the self-communication of God in Christ.

Article 3: Revelation and Preparation for Christ. The revelation of God does not only occur in history. It is a history moving toward a goal. Through it, history becomes salvation history. In the Council's conception of history, God, not man, is placed in the center and at the source. Man's answering history-creating-action is carried along by the far more important saving action of God.[20]

The first stage of revelation history began with the self-witness of God through creation and in created realities, and it is present to men of all times. But as the *relatio* of Archbishop Florit to the corrected third draft explains, this revelation in the created order is distinguished from the "supernatural revelation" which God intended from the beginning, and which consisted "in the manifestation God made of Himself to the first parents in order to open up for them the way of salvation."[21] The manner and the clarity of this revelation is left undetermined. In order to emphasize that God's salvific will is universal, the Council adds two affirmations concerning the period after the Fall: God aroused in man the hope of being saved and ceaselessly kept the human race in his care in order to save those who perseveringly do good (cf. Rom. 2:6-11). But the Council determined nothing in detail concerning the objective and subjective conditions of salvation.

The second stage is inaugurated by the new initiative of God to form a people of his own through the call of Abraham. The last

[20]Hans Waldenfels, *Offenbarung* (Munich: Hueber Verlag, 1969), 186-188.

[21]*Documenta*, 135.

sentence of the article indicates that the whole time before Christ, even outside of Israel, was a preparation for the Gospel. But in the sentence before that the Council teaches that Israel's history was a special and privileged form of preparation for the redeemer and of exercise in faith in the one God. We find here an expression of the unity of the entire pre-Christian history and the privileged preparatory nature of the revelation given to Israel.[22]

Article 4: Jesus Christ, the Personal Plenitude of Revelation. The final stage of God's personal revelation in history is the Person of Jesus Christ, the eternal Word made man. He is the summit of revelation. By his whole personal reality He is the "epiphany" of God on earth. "By his presence and manifestation, by his words and deeds, by his signs and miracles, but especially by his death and glorious resurrection from the dead, finally by sending the Spirit of Truth, Jesus Christ perfected the revelation by fulfilling it." Jesus Christ is the fullness of revelation because here what is expressed (God and his design for man), the mode of expression (the human reality of Christ), and the recipient of revelation (Jesus as hypostatically united with the Word), have become one.[23] In Jesus, a man with all his human activity and expression has become a Word that God not only speaks but is. In Jesus, the self-communication of God to man and its expression in the dimension of perceptible and social reality has reached its highpoint. We now know that God is with us in a definitive, irreversible manner "to free us from sin and death and to raise us to life eternal." We know that the world is definitively open to the concealed presence of the divine fullness. It is for this reason that the paragraph ends by saying that no new public revelation is to be expected before the final revelation of Christ in glory, for revelation is the history of God who draws near to man, and this history culminates in the definitive presence

[22]Ratzinger, "Dogmatische Konstitution über die göttliche Offenbarung," 510.

[23]Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler, *Kleines Theologisches Wörterbuch* (Freiburg: Herder, 1961), 268.

of God to the world in the God-man.[24] In Jesus, both God's gracious self-communication to man and its explicitation in the tangible, bodily, social dimension have reached their climax.

But this does not mean that we have to live only from the remembrance and application of objects and contents once and for all revealed in the past, and do not experience the event of the self-communication itself. The completion and fulfillment of the revelation in Christ includes the "final sending of the spirit" through whom the once-and-for-all "God is with us" of Christ remains an ever-present reality for the Church as a whole and for the individual believer in faith. To the once-and-for-all original revelation in Christ corresponds the ever-actual event of the dependent self-revelation of God in Christ through the Spirit in the history of the Church as a whole and in the personal faith of every believer. This is not expressly stated by the Council, but it is implied in all that the constitution says about Faith, Tradition and Scripture in the life of the Church in their connection with the once-and-for-all revelatory event of Christ.[25] The Spirit adds no "new" revelation to the definitive revelation of the Son. His role is to lead the Church and the individual believer into an understanding and actualizing interpretation of the fullness that has been communicated in the Son in all the periods and cultures of history in which the Church lives. He enables the Church, in the light of the illuminating Mystery of Christ, to discern the ambiguous signs of the times that indicate where and how God is calling the Church to concretely live and apply the definitive revelation in Christ.[26]

Article 5: Reception of the Revelation in Faith. Corresponding

[24]Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations* I (Baltimore: Helicos Press, 1961), 49.

[25]Cf. articles 5, 8, 21 and commentary.

[26]Cf. article 8: "Thus God, who spoke of old, uninterruptedly converses with the Bride of his beloved Son; and the Holy Spirit, through whom the living voice of the gospel resounds in the Church, and through her in the world, leads into all truth those who believe and makes the word of Christ dwell abundantly in them."

to its treatment of revelation, the Council deliberately accented the "biblical and personalist" aspect of faith.[27] Faith is an obedience not to revelation (as in the second schema) but to the revealing God, an obedience "by which man entrusts his whole self freely to God." But the Council refused to suppress all reference to faith as an assent given to revealed truth, as some had petitioned, since "faith essentially includes assent given to doctrine, and on the other hand this assent is itself a personal commitment (*deditio*)."[28] Thus, the first sentence of article five which describes faith is a concrete example of how the Council in this constitution surpassed the one-sided problematic of the Counter-Reform by eliminating the all too frequent over-emphasis of the gnoseological side of faith and revelation, which portrayed them primarily as the mediation and acceptance of new knowledge and which made faith appear as primarily faith in "something" rather than in "someone." The Council clearly indicates that the fundamental form of faith is the integrally human surrender and adhesion to the Person of God disclosing Himself in Christ. This is the response in which revelation achieves its goal and completion, without which the dialogue initiated by God would become a monologue, without which there would be no personal encounter. But this total affirmation of the revealing Person of God in Christ, which is the core of faith, must necessarily articulate itself into the assent to what God says, promises and commands, in the "full submission of intellect and will to the revealing God." The Council "has indicated to the theology of tomorrow the path to a synthesis which the more recent centuries have not succeeded in elaborating fully."[29]

The last two sentences of this article explain the role of grace and the Spirit in the response of faith. These affirmations imply that the revelation and the revealer do not remain in a distant past,

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[27]Cf. *relatio* of Pieter Smulders in *Documenta*, 109.

[28]Cf. *relatio* of Smulders in *Documenta*, 109.

[29]Henri de Lubac, "Commentaire du Chapitre I sur la Révélation," in Dupuy, *La Révélation Divine* I, 248 (author's own translation).

but through God's self-communication in the Spirit and grace the revelation event is actualized for every believer in immediate personal encounter. Revelation is a reality with a double dimension. To the external dimension given in Christ once-and-for-all and present to history in the life of the Church corresponds the interior illumination and attraction of the Spirit who gives man the new eyes and the new heart which alone enable him to recognize and receive the Word of God as *God's* Word addressed to him and calling for a personal response. Finally, once the revelation of God has been accepted in faith, the same Spirit makes possible an ever deepening existential understanding of the mysterious reality that has been communicated. This affirmation prepares for what Chapter 2 will say concerning Tradition in the life of the Church.

Article 6: The Revealed Truth. Some have called this paragraph "an undeveloped and almost alien element" in the totality of the first chapter.[30] However, as an appendix to the chapter, recalling "the object of revelation in all its breadth,"[31] the article serves the important purpose of dissipating any misunderstanding of the personalistic view of revelation proposed in the first chapter. The truth-mediating function of revelation and assent to the saving truth mediated are elements integral to, not contrary with, the personal encounter.[32]

Though the article basically repeats the teaching of Vatican I, it reverses the order in which it proposes the contents of revelation in line with its theocentric view of revelation. Mention is first made of God's revelation and communication of the proper object of revelation, Himself and the eternal decisions of His will regarding the salvation of men, realities which transcend the human mind's capacity

[30]Peter van Leeuwen, "The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation," *Concilium* 21 (1967), 12; repeated by Leo Bakker, "What is Man's Place in Divine Revelation?" *Concilium* 21 (1967), 28.

[31]*Relatio* of Archbishop Florit in *Documenta*, 91.

[32]Otto Semmelroth in Otto Semmelroth and Maximilian Zerwick, *Vatikanum II über das Wort Gottes* (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1966), 19.

of understanding. Revelation is, then, both a manifestation and self-giving of God, a real self-communication of himself in Christ and in the Spirit. Secondly, against the background of modern atheism the Council reaffirms that this revelation in Christ also enables man to know "with ease, with solid certitude and with no trace of error" those religious truths which are not in principle inaccessible to human reason but which man experiences great difficulty attaining in his present fallen condition.

Conclusion to Chapter 1. This chapter may be viewed as an official approbation of the development of the theology of revelation that has taken place in Catholic theology within the last thirty years. Influenced by both the biblical renewal and by twentieth century Protestant theology, the Catholic theology of revelation has assumed the biblical, personalistic and historical form apparent in this chapter. Since this presentation of revelation "harmonizes well with much modern Protestant biblical theology, (it) should facilitate interconfessional dialogue." This approach to revelation also "serves to accentuate the great central truths of revelation on which Christians commonly agree rather than the later and more refined developments of doctrine."[33]

In the light of the Council's avowed purpose of speaking to the contemporary situation, one defect should be mentioned. The chapter does not place right from the start its statement concerning the final revelation in Jesus Christ within the framework of a universal history of salvation and revelation. Karl Rahner finds that in this respect, Chapter 1 of *Dei Verbum* is "kerygmatically obsolete."[34]

Chapter 2: The Transmission of Divine Revelation

The revelation event in Jesus Christ created the organism of

[33]Dulles, "The Constitution on Divine Revelation in Ecumenical Perspective," 221.

[34]Karl Rahner, "The Content of the Christian Message," *The Catholic Mind* 68 (1970), 26. Cf. the schema on Revelation proposed by Rahner in Dupuy, *La Révélation Divine* II, 577-587.

the Church possessing Scripture and Tradition as instruments of revelation's transmission and representation. Chapter 2 clarifies the role and relation of these realities.

Article 7: Transmission of the Revelation in the Primitive Church. This article, as formulated, is dependent on Trent, but Trent's formulation is modified in the light of the deeper understanding of revelation given in Chapter 1. Trent's legalistic sounding phrase concerning Christ's promulgation of the Gospel promised by the Prophets is softened by adding that he "fulfilled" the promised Gospel. This addition points to the role of deeds mentioned in the first chapter. To Trent's characterization of the apostles preaching as the source of all saving truth and moral teaching is added the assertion that this preaching is also a communication of divine gifts. This addition points to God's active and dynamic presence in the word of preaching, communicating grace and salvation, and to tradition as a "real-communication" and not merely a "verbal communication."

The following sentence continues Vatican II's "re-reading" of Trent. The apostles did not only receive the content of their tradition from the lips of Christ, but also from the intimate experience of his life and actions. This experience of Christ was then complemented not by the "dictation" of the Spirit, but by his "prompting" which explicitated the implications of their deep, rich experience. The apostles in turn communicated this experience to others not only by verbal preaching, but by the example of their lives, by the celebration of the Eucharist and through the prescriptions and institutions they established in the Church. A final form in which this experience of Christ was communicated was Scripture, which forms an essential part of the transmission of revelation. It is this Church of the Apostles, in what it believed, in what it celebrated, this Church in its sacraments, in its concrete life, in its experience, in its objectification of itself in Scripture, which is transmitted and handed down as the normative reality for all future ages. Thus, the "mystery of Christ" communicated to the apostles and explicitated and preserved in the life, structure and writing of the apostolic Church under the guidance of the Spirit, is the

"deposit" and heritage handed over by the apostolic Church to the post-apostolic Church to be preserved, adapted and actualized.[35]

In the footsteps of Irenaeus, the paragraph affirms that between the apostolic and post-apostolic Church there is continuity in the living organs of transmission. The apostles left behind bishops as their successors, handing over to them their magisterial function. This does not mean that the bishops are the sole bearers of the tradition, but it means that the criterion of the authentic apostolic deposit and the instrument of its living presence is not Scripture alone, but conjointly the guarantee of these who have received the mission of watching over it and of proclaiming it, and who have been given the special assistance of the Spirit to fulfill this role. The same Spirit who inspired Scripture continues to assist them in their interpretation and application of Scripture to changing historical circumstances.

The final sentence of this article reminds us that revelation and its transmission through Tradition and Scripture introduce us to a true, personal encounter with God who really communicates himself in a veiled and provisional fashion by these means.

The *relatio* of Archbishop Florit notes that this article leaves open the question whether the non-written tradition of the apostles contains more objective content than the written tradition of the apostles.[36] But as many commentators have pointed out, the Council's view of revelation as the personal self-disclosure of God in His Word makes this a secondary issue. God personally addresses Himself to man in both Scripture and non-written Tradition in the Church. "The whole question what truths are or are not contained in Scripture is probably unanswerable, since Scripture says different things to different people, depending on the dispositions and previous knowledge which a given interpreter brings to it. According to the Catholic view, the Bible

[35]Karl Rahner, "Écriture et Tradition," in Henri de Lubac, *L'homme devant Dieu: Mélanges Henri de Lubac* III (Paris: Aubier, 1964), 212.

[36]*Documenta*, 92.

does not yield its full meaning unless it is read in the context of the life and experience of the Christian community—or, in other words, in the Church."[37]

Article 8: What is Tradition? This article describes in more detail what is meant by Tradition, but does not give a concise definition. The Council has clearly transcended the idea of Tradition as the oral handing on of doctrine. In the present constitution, Tradition is the living transmission of the realities of salvation, the manifold presence of the total Christ-mystery in the Church. To the genuine content of Tradition belongs "everything that contributes toward the holiness of life and increase in faith of the people of God." In this Tradition, "the Church in its doctrine, life and worship perpetuates and transmits to all generations all that she herself is, all that she believes." In the mind of the Council, therefore, Tradition is the life of the whole Church under the breath of the Spirit. In this life is transmitted more than is expressed or expressible in doctrine.

The *relatio* at this point makes it clear that in stating that the Church hands on "all that she herself is, all that she believes" (and in dropping the previous draft's phrase "all that she has"), the constitution indicates that from the apostolic tradition proceeds "all that and only that which belongs to the substantials of the Church."[38] "The present text, therefore, distinguishes between apostolic tradition in the Church and the traditional life of the Church, even if no clear criterion is given by which that which belongs to the substance (*substantialia*) can be recognized."[39]

In the second section of this article, the Council develops the dynamic aspect of tradition as growth and development. The tradition from the apostles in the Church is a living tradition because

[37]Dulles, "The Constitution on Divine Revelation in Ecumenical Perspective," 222.

[38]*Documenta*, 115.

[39]Baum, "Vatican II's Constitution on Revelation, History and Interpretation," 66.

it explicitates and develops its implicit and hidden facets under the influence of the Spirit in interaction with the realities of history: peoples, ideas, cultures, problems. The subject of this living tradition is the whole Church as the communion of all the faithful animated by the Spirit. All, according to their function in the Body of Christ, contribute to the growth in understanding of the realities and truth handed on in the life of the Church. The Church is the Mary of world history preserving and contemplating all these things in her heart. Three factors of this growth and development are mentioned: the reflection and study of the faithful; insight which results from the experience of the Christ-mystery; the preaching of the magisterium. In all these ways, the Church brings to explicit consciousness facets of the Christ-mystery latent in its faith and practice. Tradition, therefore, is not a mechanical transmission of an inert deposit. It is the abiding, ever-actual, Spirit-inspired hearing of the reality of revelation as it remains present in the Church.

The final section of the article is a more detailed emphasis of the living and vivifying nature of tradition "which permeates everything the Church is and has."[40] The writings of the Fathers of the Church are expressions of the ever new interpretation and application of the Christ-mystery in the Church's living Tradition. The practice and life of the believing and praying Church is the expression of the Tradition's vital richness. It is through this living Tradition that "the entire canon of the sacred books is made known in the Church." Tradition is the "atmosphere" in which the letter of Scripture comes to life and is understood more profoundly in the Church. Thus, God holds dialogue with the Church through Scripture immersed in the living tradition. Through the action of the Holy Spirit, the definitive revelatory Christ-event is not restricted to the past, but re-presented and actualized. The dependent self-revelation of God continues to take place in the Church on the basis of the original and definitive revelatory event of Christ.

[40]*Relatio* of Archbishop Florit in *Documenta*, 93.

Through the Spirit, the Church is led more deeply into the fullness of the mystery of Christ.

Article 9: The Mutual Relation between Scripture and Tradition. The relation between Scripture and Tradition described in the previous article is here developed further. Scripture and Tradition form an organic unity and possess "a certain identity."[41] This is true because *a*) they both have the same divine origin, though Scripture possesses this through the charism of inspiration, which is proper to it alone, and *b*) they merge into a unity to a certain extent. The ultimate reason for this is the fact that they both make the Word of God present in the Church; *c*) consequently, they both help men attain the same supernatural end. In connection with this emphasis of the unity of Scripture and Tradition, a kind of definition of these two realities is attempted. Only of Scripture is it affirmed that it *is* the speech (*locutio*) of God, consigned to writing. "Tradition, on the contrary, is only described functionally, by what it does: it mediates the word (*verbum*) of God, but 'is' not the word of God."[42] The next sentence distinguishes clearly the role of the bishops from the role of the apostles with regard to Tradition. Tradition was constituted by the apostles, but through their successors Tradition is only faithfully preserved, explained and made known.[43] Their function is one of conservation and service.

The next sentence is the one chosen by the Commission out of the seven proposed by the Pope during the final session of the Council. "Consequently it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed." There is question here of "certitude," not simply of "knowledge." When Scripture is not sufficiently clear and explicit, the Church can find in Tradition illumination that gives certitude. In his explanation of this addition to the general assembly, Archbishop Florit stated that the

[41] *Relatio* of Archbishop Florit in *Documenta*, 93.

[42] Ratzinger, "Dogmatische Konstitution über die göttliche Offenbarung," 525.

[43] *Relatio* of Archbishop Florit in *Documenta*, 136.

text does not imply that Tradition represents a quantitative addition to Scripture. The question of the "material sufficiency of Scripture" was deliberately left open by the Council. Ecumenically, the addition should not cause insurmountable problems. It is widely recognized by Protestant theology today that the certitude of faith is not derived from "scripture alone" and that Luther's *Sola Scriptura* cannot isolate Scripture from the history of the faith of the Church and the action of the Spirit in the Church.[44]

The following sentence could be more troublesome from the ecumenical point of view. It repeats Trent's formula that Scripture and Tradition "are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of devotion and reverence."[45] However, this does not intend to be a complete description of the relation between Scripture and Tradition. In its context, "it is simply a confession of fidelity to the inviolability of dogma, the ecclesial form of faith."[46]

Article 10: Scripture, Tradition and Magisterium. The first paragraph explains the relation of Tradition and Scripture to the entire Church. The "one sacred deposit of the Word of God" formed by Scripture and Tradition has been entrusted to the whole Church. All the people of God in a unique union of faithful and pastors form the total subject which holds, professes and thus hands on the faith contained in the deposit of the Word of God. This represents an advance over previous documents, especially Vatican I and the encyclical *Humani Generis*, which only spoke of the relations of the Word of God to the

[44]Semmelroth in Semmelroth and Zerwick, *Vatikanum II über das Wort Gottes*, 26. Cf. Barth, "Conciliorum Tridentini et Vaticani I inhaerens vestigiis?", 518, and Baum, "Vatican II's Constitution on Revelation, History and Interpretation," 68.

[45]Cf. Barth's comments on this in Barth, "Conciliorum Tridentini et Vaticani I inhaerens vestigiis?", 518-519.

[46]Ratzinger, "Dogmatische Konstitution über die göttliche Offenbarung," 526. Cf. the historical background of the statement in Trent and in Saint Basil, explained by Ratzinger, "Dogmatische Konstitution über die göttliche Offenbarung," 526.

magisterium. It corrects a misunderstanding which would isolate the magisterium from the entire people of God in the role of conserving, professing and handing on the revealed deposit.

The second paragraph explains the special relation of the magisterium to the deposit of the Word of God. The magisterium alone has the function of authentically interpreting the Word of God in Scripture and Tradition. But to forestall a frequent misunderstanding of this interpretative function, the Council adds that this teaching office is not—as is often maintained—placed over the Word of God. The Word of God is a reality prior to the teaching office of the Church and stands over this office. The magisterial function of the Church is ministerial and its first service is to listen to the Word of God. The authority of the magisterium is not authority over the Word of God, to which it is bound, but authority in relation to the faithful, to whom the members of the magisterial college also belong. Furthermore, "the function of the *magisterium* is not to decide what the faithful are to believe, but rather to formulate accurately beliefs which already exist in the Church thanks to the apostolic witness, originally embodied in Scripture, and ever freshly understood through the living presence of the Spirit of Truth which Christ promised and bestowed upon his Church."[47]

Therefore, the three realities which have so often been separated from one another and opposed to one another really form a living unity. Between Scripture, Tradition and the teaching office of the Church there is no competition, but co-operation and coordination under the influence of the Holy Spirit who is their transcendent principle of operation. "One cannot stand without the others, and all together and each in its own way ... contribute effectively to the salvation of souls."

Conclusion to Chapter 2. From the ecumenical point of view, Chapter 2 has been called the most important chapter in *Dei Verbum.*

[47]Dulles, "The Constitution on Divine Revelation in Ecumenical Perspective," 224. Cf. the *relatio* of Archbishop Florit in *Documenta*, 94.

"Without attempting the impossible task of bridging the gap between Protestants and Catholics on the norms and channels of revelation, it succeeds in offering a very irenic and moderate statement of the Catholic position."[48] Most remarkable from this perspective is the convergence to be discovered between this chapter of *Dei Verbum* and the Report of the Fourth Meeting of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches held at Montreal in 1963. In substance, both conceive the relation between Scripture and Tradition as one of inseparability: Scripture not without Tradition, Tradition not without Scripture. Both Catholics and Protestants have progressed in understanding since the Reformation and Trent.[49] Catholics now see that Scripture and Tradition are two forms, different by nature, for the communication of revelation which together make present the Word of God. Protestant theologians admit that Scripture by itself, by the mere fact of its existence, cannot constitute the criterion of the true Tradition. But on both sides there is need of further reflection and dialogue concerning the criterion of the apostolic tradition in the Church and the role of the magisterium in relation to this criteriological problem.[50]

Chapter 3: The Inspiration and Interpretation of Scripture

After its treatment of Tradition and the relation between Scripture and Tradition, the Council proceeds to consecrate the next four Chapters (3-6) to Scripture. Chapter 3 briefly presents the teaching of the Church concerning the inspiration of Scripture, the truth of

[48]Dulles, "The Constitution on Divine Revelation in Ecumenical Perspective," 224-225.

[49]Jean-Louis Leuba, "La Tradition à Montréal et à Vatican II," in Dupuy, *La Révélation Divine* II, 473-485.

[50]Cf. Barth, "Conciliorum Tridentini et Vaticani I inhaerens vestigiis?", 517-519; Leuba, "La Tradition à Montréal et à Vatican II," 486-497; van Leeuwen, "The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation," 16-18.

Scripture and the principles of Catholic interpretation of Scripture. In other words, the theological character of Scripture is explained. Because of its inspired nature, the Bible is the especially qualified mediator of the truth of revelation. The title had originally contained the word "inerrancy" but the word was dropped in order to emphasize the positive values of the Bible, rather than the negative one of immunity from error.

Article 11: The Inspiration and Truth of Scripture. The first sentence connects this chapter with Chapter 1 on Revelation. The inspiring action of the Holy Spirit effected the preservation and written presentation in the world of what has been divinely revealed once and for all. Right from the beginning, therefore, we are told what to seek in the Bible: "all that which pertains to the object of revelation and that alone."[51]

The second sentence reproduces the traditional teaching concerning the inspiration of Scripture, the extension of inspiration to all the books and all their parts, and the canonical and sacred nature of these books because they have God as author[52] through inspiration and have been handed down as such to the Church.

The third sentence explains the activity of the human author under inspiration in a way that should dispel the widespread impression that inspiration is identified with mechanical inspiration and that the Church is committed to this obsolete mechanical view. In the text, "the transcendent activity of God is exactly coordinated to a human activity which it arouses, directs and envelops totally."[53] The men whom God chose and employed in composing the sacred books made use of their own powers and abilities. The result was that with God

[51]Pierre Grelot, "Commentaire du Chapitre III," in Dupuy, *La Révélation Divine* II, 360 (all translations from this source are the author's own).

[52]The word used in the Latin text is *auctor*, the general expression used since the patristic era. Perhaps a more exact translation would be: originator.

[53]Grelot, "Commentaire du Chapitre III," 363.

acting in and through them, but yet as authors in the proper sense, i.e., literary authors, they wrote everything God intended them to write. This description permits the Bible to be a book "which grew out of a particular religious and cultural context through divinely assisted human effort."[54]

The Council has reaffirmed the inspiration of Scripture on the dogmatic level, abstracting from all philosophical and psychological explanations of the fact. It does not make use of the terms "instrument" or "divine motion" as did the encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* in 1943, nor does it speak of God as "illuminating the mind" or "moving" the will as did Benedict XV in 1920. It neither denies nor affirms these further precisions, but reduces the doctrine to what is dogmatically essential. In non-technical language, the third statement does imply the idea of instrumental causality: men are "employed" by God and God "acts in them and through them." Therefore, the composition of the book has its first source in God and these books contain "all that he wanted and everything he wanted." However, contrary to the preparatory schema, "the text avoids formally attributing to God the quality of writer"[55] or literary author. The accent is placed on the full human activity in the composition of Scripture, and "everything which pertains to the literary author in the strict technical sense, is to be sought on the side of the human author."[56] This emphasis provides the basis for the later affirmation of the necessity of critical interpretation of Scripture. The Council's formulation invites and allows great freedom for renewed theological reflection on the goal, nature and manner of divine influence and human activity in the composition of Scripture. Perhaps there is need in the Catholic theology of inspiration to leave

[54]Dulles, "The Constitution on Divine Revelation in Ecumenical Perspective," 225-226.

[55]Grelot, "Commentaire du Chapitre III," 362.

[56]Aloys Grillmeier, "Dogmatische Konstitution über die göttliche Offenbarung: Kommentar zum III. Kapitel," in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche: Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil*, Band II, 545 (all translations from this source are the author's own).

more room for human limitations in a way that does not deny the true divine causality and yet does not make God responsible for human deficiencies either in the form or the content.

The second paragraph speaks of the truth of Scripture. Since on the basis of inspiration, "everything asserted by the inspired authors must be held to be asserted by the Holy Spirit," and is therefore the Word of God, "it follows that the books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching solidly, faithfully and without error that Truth which God wanted put into the sacred writings for the sake of our salvation."

From the development of the text it is clear that the Council intended to formulate here the traditional problem of the inerrancy of Scripture in a more positive and open manner. Rejecting the formulation of the first schema that inspiration "excludes any error in whatever manner, whether religious or profane" as well as that of the second draft which stated that Scripture is "free from all error whatever," the text affirms that "the books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching solidly, faithfully and without error that Truth which God wanted put into the sacred writings for the sake of our salvation."

The first observation to be made concerning this sentence is that biblical truth is related here to the Bible as a whole, not to the individual biblical authors. In the following article, the Constitution explicitates this idea: "Serious attention must be given to the content and unity of the whole of Scripture if the meaning of the sacred texts is to be worked out." In other words, "no one chapter, book, or author is to be read as if it alone were the Bible."[57] This does not mean that the Council denies inerrancy to the individual biblical authors. It abstains from expressing itself concerning this point. It takes a minimal position and leaves the rest to further theological discussion.[58]

[57]Dulles, "The Constitution on Divine Revelation in Ecumenical Perspective," 226.

[58]Norbert Lohfink, "Die Wahrheit der Bibel und die Geschichtlichkeit der Evangelien," *Orientierung* 29 (1965), 254.

The second observation on this sentence is that the Theological Commission explicitly stated that the word "teach" is to be understood in the sense of "affirm" or "assert." The Council again has adopted a minimal position and does not officially adopt a theory of inspiration in which the word "teach" is a key concept.[59]

The third and most important comment on this sentence refers to the final phrase: "the truth which God wanted put into the sacred writings for the sake of our salvation." The schema of Spring 1963 had spoken of the truth which the books of Scripture teach "without any error." At the third session on October 2, 1964, Cardinal König of Vienna protested against this formulation and quoted a list of historical errors to be found in the Bible. Both Cardinal König and Cardinal Meyer of Chicago forcefully maintained that the Bible taught the "truth of salvation" without error. The Theological Commission then reformulated the phrase to read: "All the books of Scripture with all their parts teach ... the truth of salvation faithfully, firmly, entirely and without error." Agreeing with the reservations of many Fathers of the Council, the Pope in his letter to the Commission expressed uneasiness at what might prove to be a premature and too decisive solution to the complicated problem of the extent of inerrancy. Many bishops feared that if they only spoke of the "truth of salvation," occasion might be given for the misinterpretation that the truth of the Bible was restricted to matters of faith and morals.[60] The Theological Commission had prepared a document assuring the bishops that "by the word *salutaris* (of salvation) it is in no way indicated that Sacred Scripture is not inspired in its entirety and is the Word of God.... This expression does not imply any material limitation of the truth of Scripture, but indicates its formal specification, which has to be

[59]E.g., Pierre Benoit, *La Prophétie* (Paris, 1947), 340-353; idem, "Note Complémentaire sur l'inspiration," *Revue Biblique* 63 (1956), 416-422.

[60]Certain theologians of the nineteenth century proposed the restriction of inerrancy and inspiration to matters of faith and morals. This theory was rejected by Leo XIII in the encyclical *Providentissimus Deus.*

taken account of in judging in what sense not only the truths of faith and morals and the facts connected with the history of salvation are true, but also all that is affirmed in Scripture."[61] However, to avoid all misinterpretation, the Commission agreed to omit the word "*salutaris*" and put in its place the relative clause: "which God wanted put into the sacred writings for the sake of our salvation."

This addition is not a mere play on words. It affirms what was intended by the previous draft but does it in a way that is not open to the misinterpretation that the Council was affirming two clearly distinguishable areas in Scripture: salvific statements which are free from error and other non-saving statements which could contain error because they are indifferent for salvation. Rather, the text indicates that like revelation, the fixation of revelation in Scripture is totally determined by the viewpoint of our salvation, no matter what the material content may be. Revelation and Scripture cannot communicate God's plan of salvation without touching upon many areas studied also in human sciences: anthropology, paleontology, and especially history. But it does this not from the point of view of the secular sciences, but from the point of view of our salvation.[62]

The Council here is primarily interested in reaffirming the fundamental truth, which had been lost sight of in much discussion concerning the inerrancy of Scripture, that the divine purpose in the inspiration of Scripture is the integral and accurate fixation of the truth God communicated in Christ for salvation. The affirmation of the Council makes it unnecessary to defend the exaggerated view that the biblical writers made no mistakes on any matter—even astronomy, biology, or secular history. "This larger and more flexible concept of inerrancy will permit Catholic exegetes to feel free to interpret the individual texts with complete honesty."[63]

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[61]Giovanni Caprile, "Trois Amendments au schéma sur la Révélation," in Dupuy, *La Révélation Divine* II, 678-679 (author's own translation).

[62]Grelot, "Commentaire du Chapitre III," 368.

[63]Dulles, "The Constitution on Divine Revelation in Ecumenical Perspective," 226.

The Council has not positively affirmed, but by its formulation has left the question open, whether Scripture contains affirmations which are not errors from the viewpoint of our salvation, but which are errors from the viewpoint of secular science.[64] The contrary encyclical teaching has been referred to in a footnote, but this teaching has not been made the object of a conciliar statement. This does not mean that theology can totally disregard the previous encyclical teaching, but the way is opened for placing this teaching in its proper context as the result of further instruction from exegetical investigation of Scripture. Perhaps the most likely theological starting point for an answer to this complicated question opened by the Council is that of P. Grelot as summarized by A. Grillmeier:

> In the fragile vessel of human language and human writings, God's Word communicates itself to us without falsification. God's intention is directed to the effective communication of his word of salvation in all its fullness. He guarantees this with his full authority. In this lies the proper meaning of inspiration, of the assistance of the Holy Spirit. In relation to the truth communicated without error 'for the sake of our salvation' all else has only a ministerial function. It is the medium or framework of the properly intended affirmation, and therefore only has a share in the inerrancy in so far as the service of the word of salvation demands.[65]

In conformity with the biblical notion of truth, the Council affirms that God communicates the truth of revelation "firmly" and "faithfully" in Scripture. As the guarantee of the permanency of the saving truth among us, Scripture is a witness to the covenant faithfulness of God to his people. In Scripture, we encounter the saving truth without error because of the covenant faithfulness of God. The truth and trustworthiness of God belong inseparably together.[66]

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[64]Zerwick in Semmelroth and Zerwick, *Vatikanum II über das Wort Gottes*, 33. Cf. Lohfink, "Die Wahrheit der Bibel und die Geschichtlichkeit der Evangelien," 255.

[65]Grillmeier, "Dogmatische Konstitution über die göttliche Offenbarung," 550. Cf. Pierre Grelot, *La Bible, Parole de Dieu* (Paris: Desclée, 1965).

[66]Grillmeier, "Dogmatische Konstitution über die göttliche Offenbarung," 548.

Article 12: Principles for the Interpretation of Scripture. Article eleven's emphasis on the full participation of true human authors in the composition of Scripture and on the truth which God wishes to communicate for our salvation leads to the question concerning the interpretation of Scripture. The Council reaffirms and develops the hermeneutical principles of *Divino Afflante Spiritu.* To discover what God wanted to communicate to us, "the interpreter should carefully investigate what meaning the sacred writers really intended, and what God wanted to manifest by means of their words." The first clause of the quotation will be developed in the second paragraph of the article which treats of the critical methods of biblical interpretation; the second clause prepares for the third paragraph which indicates theological rules for the interpretation of Scripture.

The theological goal of exegesis is to discover the truth which God has communicated for the sake of our salvation. But this truth is intimately connected with the meaning that the human authors intended to express.[67] Therefore, the first task of exegesis will be to use all the critical methods available for discovering the intention and meaning of the human authors. *a)* One way, "among others," is to study the "literary forms" used by the writers. "For truth is proposed and expressed in a variety of ways, depending on whether a text is history of one kind or another, or whether its form is that of prophecy, poetry, or some other type of speech." Recognition is given here to the fact that various historical forms are to be found in Scripture. Consequently, the relation of the presentation of the author to historical factuality will vary with the literary form. *b)* Investigation must be made of the situation and circumstances of the author's time and culture which conditioned his experience and apprehension of the realities he seeks to communicate and influenced the literary forms and the manner of presentation. Furthermore, the temporal and cultural milieu influenced the author's intention and meaning

[67]Grillmeier, "Dogmatische Konstitution über die göttliche Offenbarung," 552. For a different interpretation, see Lohfink, "Die Wahrheit der Bibel und die Geschichtlichkeit der Evangelien," 255.

through the medium of the customary ways of perceiving, speaking and narrating and of the forms of human intercourse at the time of the writer. Since every writer writes for his contemporaries, it is in function of his historical and cultural framework that his work is to be interpreted. In principle, the Constitution approves all legitimate methods employed by historical-critical exegesis for discovering the historically conditioned intention and meaning of the biblical authors. This is the necessary starting point toward discovering the truth God has communicated for our salvation and is itself a theological task.

A strong conciliar statement on this point was necessary in the face of opposition from a small but powerful group of theologians to all efforts to open up the Bible to scientific critical study. Despite the important encyclical of Pius XII (*Divino Afflante Spiritu*) commending the critical study of the Bible, a conservative opposition continued to attack Catholic biblical scholars. This Conciliar statement which defends the freedom of exegetes to work responsibly with all the tools of modern research is therefore of the greatest importance.

However, the conscientious application of the rules of scientific critical method does not suffice for an understanding of the Word of God. Therefore, the third paragraph treats of the theological rules for the interpretation of Scripture. Three points are emphasized: *a*) the general principle of theological interpretation; *b*) the role of exegetes in the Church; *c*) the role of the magisterium in matters of exegesis.

a) The general principle: "But, since Holy Scripture must be read and interpreted according to the same Spirit by whom it was written, the correct interpretation of the sacred text demands that the interpreter give no less diligent attention to the content and unity of the whole of Scripture, taking into account the living tradition of the whole Church and analogy of faith." The Council has here affirmed a hermeneutical principle that derives from the completely theological character of Scripture and its position in the Church and her tradition.

1. **The content and unity of the whole of Scripture:** This appeal to the content and unity of all of Scripture does not deny the proper character and unique contribution of each

book and the necessity of using all the means of biblical criticism. But standing in a tradition whose culminating point is Christ, each book under the inspiration of the Spirit takes its place in a greater organic whole. Therefore, there is need of complementing the historical analytic method of interpretation with the coordinating and synthesizing method which illuminates everything from the keystone which is Christ.

2. **The living tradition of the Church:** The newer hermeneutic has adopted a more positive attitude toward the significance of tradition for the interpretation of texts.[68] This is especially true of the "Sacred Scriptures" which are the expression of the "Word of God" which under the influence of the Spirit is lived and reactualized in the Church's life. By placing himself at the interior of this tradition, the exegete is in a position to understand the Word of God in Scripture from "within."
3. **The analogy of faith:** The unity of the revelation and the unity of Scripture which witnesses to it has a further consequence: there is a proportion and harmony between all the elements of revelation, and one element, when seen in relation to another, illuminates it. "Thus the originating individual statements of Scripture, for example, concerning Father, Son and Spirit, concerning the person and mission of Jesus, are to be viewed in relation to one another and placed in relation to the trinitarian and christological dogmas."[69]

The Theological Commission deliberately left open the question concerning the "fuller sense"[70] of Scripture. But the three theological

[68]Hans G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1960), 275ff.

[69]Grillmeier, "Dogmatische Konstitution über die göttliche Offenbarung," 556.

[70]The literal sense of a text in the modern sense is determined by the explicit intention of the inspired writer. But the design of God, who makes use of the

principles for the interpretation of Scripture just mentioned are closely connected with the problem and perhaps open the way for a more organic connection between the results of critical exegesis and the use of Scripture in theology.[71]

b) The role of exegetes in the Church: After having given exegetes the charter to use all the tools of modern research for the investigation of Scripture, the Council here points out that they exercise a specialized and necessary function in the Church's growing understanding and appropriation of the revealed reality. Though they cannot take the place of the "judgement of the Church" in its organic and hierarchized totality, they play an indispensable role in the process by which this judgement reaches its maturity. This is a correction of the one-sided stress of some theologians on the submission of scripture scholars to the teaching of the magisterium.

c) The role of the magisterium in matters of exegesis: The magisterium has the function of "guarding and interpreting the Word of God" authentically, yet exegetical research is not the specialty of the magisterium but of the exegete, and in this area the magisterium must listen that its judgement and comprehension may mature. Its mandate does permit it to intervene in exegetical matters, but not blindly or arbitrarily. "The relation between scientific exegesis and the teaching authority must be one of mutual listening."[72]

Article 13: The Condescension of God. In this concluding article, the Council returns to the basic idea that Scripture is the Word of God expressed in the words of man. Like its analogue, the

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human author, can transcend the explicit consciousness that the human author has of it. His text therefore can carry a more profound meaning which appears when one confronts it with the totality of the record of revelation—a fuller sense. Cf. Pierre Grelot, *Sens chrétien de l'Ancien Testament* (Tournai: Desclée, 1962), 449ff.

[71]Grillmeier, "Dogmatische Konstitution über die göttliche Offenbarung," 555.

[72]Dulles, "The Constitution on Divine Revelation in Ecumenical Perspective," 227.

Incarnation, this mystery of Scripture manifests the condescension of God which has its root in his love for men.

Conclusion to Chapter 3. Formerly, the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture were doctrines common to Protestants and Catholics. Today many Protestants deny the inerrancy of the Bible and either reject its divine inspiration or limit the extent of this inspiration. But perhaps "the doctrine of the final text opens up new possibilities of fruitful encounter with non-Fundamentalistic Protestants."[73]

The idea of inspiration is now formulated in a way to clearly exclude a narrow mechanical understanding of inspiration as comparable to dictation to a secretary. The formulation of biblical inerrancy is broad and flexible and does not oblige Catholics to maintain that the biblical writers made no mistakes on any matter. The chapter's defense of scientific, biblical scholarship will guarantee the continuation of the exchanges between Protestant and Catholic exegetes which have played a major role in the ecumenical movement. In all these ways, the Council has called attention to the human aspect of the divine-human mystery of the Word of God in the words of man. Perhaps some Protestants, who have long recognized this human element, might profitably reconsider the divine aspect which the Council has reaffirmed.

Chapter 4: The Old Testament

In this Chapter, the Constitution definitely separates itself from a modern tendency to neglect the Old Testament as a stage left far behind now that we possess the glory of Christ. As "Word of God" the Old Testament possesses a permanent significance. The Old Testament must be taken seriously by the Christian, because without the Old Testament, Jesus Christ and the New Testament are unintelligible. Ideas have no beginning and end, but the revelation of God in history is a reality only in the totality of what has taken place.

Article 14: The History of Salvation in the Old Testament.

[73]Dulles, "The Constitution on Divine Revelation in Ecumenical Perspective," 225.

Article fourteen speaks of the Old Testament first as an economy of salvation, then as the books in which the history is consigned as Word of God. In the first section, the main steps of the Old Testament economy of salvation are indicated. This economy is rooted in the love of God, has as its goal the salvation of the whole human race, and the means to this goal is the election of a particular people as the bearer of his revelation of promise. This act of election concretized itself in the preparatory covenant with Abraham and the solemn covenant with the people of Israel at Sinai through which God promised to be with his people in history and demanded their obedience. Through word and deed he revealed himself as the one true living God and caused them to experience his ways with men. The living Word of God through the prophets deepened and clarified this experience.

Finally, this unified series of revelatory and saving experiences announced, narrated and explained by God's living word found its written fixation as true Word of God in the books of the Old Testament. The permanent value of these books stems from the fact that they are the inspired Word of God.

Article 15: The Importance of the Old Testament for Christians. This article takes up again the distinction between the old economy of salvation and the books in which it is recorded and treats them primarily from a christological viewpoint. As economy of salvation, the Old Testament served the purpose of preparing for and announcing the coming of the universal redeemer and his messianic Kingdom and of indicating their meaning through a plethora of symbols, images, words and events which possess the function of types and figures of what is to come. The Scripture quotations indicate that the orientation of the Old Testament toward Christ was clearly understood by the early Church. But again the Council expressly refused to enter into the question of the "fuller sense."

The rest of the article treats of the permanent significance of the books of the Old Testament for Christians. These books still manifest today to all men who come in contact with them a knowledge of God and man and of God's ways with man. The Council cautions that some of the doctrines and precepts in the Old Testament are incomplete

and provisional. Though these things are useful for manifesting the pedagogy God used in educating his people, they cannot be directly used for our guidance. But the Council immediately lists five areas in which the Old Testament remains permanently valuable for Christians. The list is not a synthesis of Old Testament theology or spirituality, nor is it complete. It speaks neither of man's relations with his neighbors, nor of the cosmic activity of God, nor of the action of man in the world and on the world.[74] But the text does provide suggestions and a stimulus for further private study of the Old Testament.

Article 16: The Unity of the Two Testaments. This article treats of the relationship of the Old and New Testaments as a relationship of unity and mutual illumination. To express this, the Council adopts the formulation of Augustine: "The New Testament is hidden in the Old; the Old Testament is made manifest in the New." The Old Testament only finds its full meaning in the New Testament while at the same time the Old Testament illuminates the New Testament. The Protestant Old Testament exegete, G. von Rad, expressed the same idea: "The coming of Jesus Christ as a historical reality leaves the exegete no choice at all; he must interpret the Old Testament as pointing to Christ, whom he must understand in its light."

Conclusion to Chapter 4. This brief statement concerning the Old Testament does not raise any serious problems for ecumenical relations. "Protestants and Catholics are generally agreed that the Old Testament is an essential part of the Christian Bible and that it receives its full religious significance in the light of the New Testament fulfillment."[75]

Chapter 5: The New Testament

This chapter contains four articles. The first is concerned with all the writings of the New Testament (article seventeen). The two

[74]Luis Alonso-Schoekel, "Commentaire du Chapitre IV," in Dupuy, *La Révélation Divine* II, 395.

[75]Dulles, "The Constitution on Divine Revelation in Ecumenical Perspective," 227.

following treat of the apostolic origin and of the historicity of the Gospels (articles eighteen and nineteen). The final article is concerned with the other writings of the New Testament (article twenty).

Article 17: The Excellence of the New Testament. The first sentence affirms the efficacious presence through the writings of the New Testament of "the Word of God which is the power of God for the salvation of all who believe" (cf. Rom. 1:16). This had been expressed more clearly in the earlier draft which spoke of the Word of God being "efficaciously present" through the New Testament writings. But it is clear that the ambiguous "is set forth" (*presentatur*) of the final text is to be interpreted in the light of the phraseology of the previous draft because the Commission itself declared that the change was merely formal: "we explain the efficacy of the New Testament writings in simpler words."[76]

The basis of this efficacy of the writings is the incarnate reality and action of this Word in the Person of Jesus Christ. The text gives a brief outline of this event modeled on that given in Chapter 1, article four. No doubt the exegete will deplore the accommodated sense in which the Council applies Eph. 3:5-6 to the Person of Christ and his work.

The last sentence returns again to the active and permanent witness given to the reality of the Incarnate Word in the inspired writings of the New Testament. The excellence of the New Testament writings consists in the revealed content of this witness: the person and mystery of Jesus Christ.

Article 18: The Apostolic Origin of the Gospels. The article affirms the pre-eminence of the Gospels as the principal testimony to the life and doctrine of the Incarnate Word. The response of the Commission to a proposed amendment makes it clear that "life" here means the existence of Jesus in its totality, including the paschal mystery of his death and resurrection.[77]

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[76]*Documenta*, 127.

[77]Xavier Léon-Dufour, "Commentaire du Chapitre V," in Dupuy, *La Révélation Divine* II, 408 (all translations from this source are the author's own).

The important question of the apostolic origin of the Gospels is treated with care. Without entering into the problems of literary criticism and of the dates of the redaction of the Gospels, the Council affirms the broad apostolic origin of the Gospels on the basis of the firm and universal tradition in the Church that goes back to the second century. "The council does not determine more exactly in what way the Apostles stand at the origin of the Gospels. The Gospels contain the apostolic preaching, but the measure of the apostolic influence in the redaction of the Gospels is not indicated."[78] Against the background of this broad affirmation of the Council, exegetes are free to determine in what precise manner the individual Gospels are related to the apostles and who actually redacted them. "The real relation of a text to a man in the framework of a tradition is not to be confused with the literary composition in the strict modern sense."[79]

Article 19: The Relation of the Gospels to History. Next to the section concerning the relation between Scripture and Tradition, this article was the most debated and the most delicately phrased of the Constitution, for the question concerning the historicity of the Gospels is a key question and at the same time a very complicated and explosive one.[80] In the first schema, a condemnation had been pronounced against all who doubt the genuine and historical truth of the words and deeds of the Lord as they are narrated in the Gospels. N. Lohfink commented that if this text had not died, Catholic exegesis would have died.[81]

The first text of the mixed commission, drafted in the winter of

[78]Béda Rigaux, "Dogmatische Konstitution über die göttliche Offenbarung: Kommentar zum V. Kapitel," in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche: Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil*, Band II, 566 (author's own translation).

[79]Grelot, "La Constitution sur la Révélation," 243, note 1.

[80]Grelot, "La Constitution sur la Révélation," 100 and note 1, 110 and note 2. Also cf. Joseph Fitzmyer, "A Recent Roman Scriptural Controversy," *Theological Studies* 22 (1961), 426-444.

[81]Lohfink, "Die Wahrheit der Bibel und die Geschichtlichkeit der Evangelien," 256.

1962-1963, was less extreme. The section on the Gospels began: "Holy Mother Church has always firmly held ... that the four gospels hand on truthfully what Jesus really did and taught." This is practically the definitive text without the word "historicity." But a few lines later we find the ambiguous sentence: "The Gospels hand on to us true and faithful history."

The text of Spring 1964 was reformulated to state: "They hand on to us what is true and honest concerning Jesus." Furthermore, in dependence on the new instruction of the biblical commission which had recently appeared, a brief outline of the three stages of the formation of the Gospels was included. In the third redaction of the schema which resulted from the debate in the fall session of 1964, the section concerning the Gospels was practically unchanged. Only a brief and rather extraneous polemic against the Form Critical school of the 1920's was eliminated. This development brought the text into closer correspondence with the present state of exegesis.

However, a number of Council Fathers were not content with the clause stating that the Gospels "hand on to us what is true and honest concerning Jesus." One hundred fifty-eight Fathers wanted to strengthen the reference to history by amending the clause to: "what is true and honest concerning the history (*historia*) of Jesus" or "hand on to us truly historical (*historicam*) narration." Eighty-five petitioned the addition: "in such a way that, concerning the historicity of the facts, they always hand on objective truth."

The Commission reaffirmed that it wanted to avoid the words "history" and "historical" because of the ambiguity of these words in modern usage. Furthermore, it felt that the phrase "true and honest" sufficed for the purpose because "true" (*vera*) is applied to those things "whose affirmation agrees with the reality of the fact (*cum realitate facti*): for truth is *adaequatio rei et intellectus.*" "Honest" (*sincera*), however, complements "true" as the subjective element complementing the objective element.[82]

[82] *Documenta*, 172.

At this point the Pope made his third recommendation to the Theological Commission. He also did not think that the text as it stood sufficiently assured the historicity of the Gospels. He therefore asked, this time rather insistently, that *et sincera* be replaced by *seu historica fide digna.* The text would then affirm that the Gospels "hand on what is true, i.e., worthy of historical faith (historically credible)."

The Commission again refused to make the desired change because the word "historical" lent itself to equivocation. The one word can be translated by two different German words that have become technical expressions in critical circles: *historisch* and *geschichtlich.* The *historisch* reality is characterized by its facticity (i.e., its having happened in the past at a time and place that can be located) and its being open to verification by objective research. The *geschichtlich* reality is one that is present, having existential significance here and now for us, and for which there can be no verification apart from faithful participation.[83] Thus, the expression *fides historica* could be misunderstood in a Bultmannian sense which would in no way guarantee the actual occurrence of Gospel events.[84]

Therefore, the Commission decided to leave intact the clause affirming that the Gospels "hand on what is true and honest concerning Jesus." But the Commission met the recommendation of the Pope by making an addition to the first sentence of article nineteen after the word "Gospels:" "whose historicity the Church unhesitatingly affirms." The abstract concept "historicity" was to be preferred because it was not such a debated term in theological-exegetical literature as "history" and "historical." Actually, the new clause adds little to what the sentence already said: "Holy Mother Church has firmly and with absolute confidence held, and continues to hold, that the four Gospels

[83]Norman J. Young, *History and Existential Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), 25.

[84]Giovanni Caprile, "Tre emendamenti allo schema sulla rivelazione," *La Civilta Cattolica* 117 (1966), 229.

... faithfully hand on what Jesus ... really (*reapse*) did and taught for their salvation...."

The question then arises: What is the precise nature of this historicity of the Gospels which the Council affirms in the first sentence of article twelve? In the context of the text's formation and of the rest of the article, "historicity" takes on the broad sense of having a genuine relation with Jesus of Nazareth, the Jesus of past history. But the precise relation of the Gospel narratives and sayings to Jesus of Nazareth must be determined more in detail by exegetical investigation of the history of the tradition and of the literary forms used.[85] Article twelve already gave recognition to the fact that various historical literary forms are used in Scripture and that the relation of a narrative to factual reality will vary with the literary form. The explanations given in the rest of this article concerning the three stages of the Gospel tradition and concerning the kerygmatic Gospel form make it evident that the Gospel method of recording history does not correspond to the methods of modern history writing. But what the Council is insisting upon here is that "the history of salvation related by the Gospels is rooted in facts which are accessible to us in different ways through the sources used by the evangelists,"[86] that the Gospel witness does bring us into contact with the person, words and deeds of Jesus, that the connection between the Gospel's and Jesus' actual doctrine and conduct must not be minimized.

The precise nature of this connection must be determined by exegetical study of the formation of the Gospel tradition. Following the 1964 Instruction of the Biblical Commission (which is therefore the best commentary to this section) but in a more compressed manner, the Council implicitly distinguishes three stages: 1) Jesus' teaching and actions "until the day he was taken up into heaven."; 2) The transmission of what Jesus said and did by his apostles after the

[85]Lohfink, "Die Wahrheit der Bibel und die Geschichtlichkeit der Evangelien," 256.

[86]Leon-Dufour, "Commentaire du Chapitre V," 430.

Ascension, a transmission made in the light of a clearer understanding of these words and deeds derived from the Resurrection appearances and the influence of the Holy Spirit; 3) The composition of the Gospels by the Evangelists. This work of the Evangelists is characterized by four types of activity: *a*) selection of what interested them from the oral and written material available to them; *b*) synthesis of the material as, for example, in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew; *c*) adaptation and application of the traditional material to the problems and circumstances of their local congregations; *d*) composition in the form of kerygma, i.e., proclamation of the Good News. This enumeration is concluded with the clause discussed previously which affirms that in all this activity the Evangelists "hand on to us what is true and honest concerning Jesus." Despite all transformations, adaptations, interpretations, and developments, there was no deformation but faithful explicitation. The intention of the Evangelists was that indicated by Luke in his prologue: to teach "the truth" and to give the reader full security "concerning those matters about which we have been instructed" (cf. Lk. 1:2-4). The word "truth" is placed in quotation marks in the text in order to refer to the Greek word *asphaleia* used by Luke, which means at the same time certainty and truth, or as the Theological Commission commented: "security in objective truth."[87]

Article 20: The Other Writings of the New Testament. This article brings the fifth chapter to a close by giving a brief description of the contributions of the remaining books of the New Testament. They confirm the Christ event; they explicitate and develop his true teaching; they proclaim the redemptive value of his action; they recount the origins of the Church; they announce the glorious consummation. All this was done under the influence of the presence of the Risen Lord and the guidance of His Spirit whose function is to lead the Church into the fullness of the truth revealed in the Christ event.

Conclusion to Chapter 5. In this chapter, the Council has given its approval to the use of the method of form criticism and the method

[87] *Documenta*, 172.

of tradition criticism in the study of the Gospels. This merely sanctions a practice that has been profitably used by Catholic exegetes for many years. But this official approval of exegetical work to determine the historical significance of the texts is of importance, both for the protection of Catholic exegetes who have been unjustly accused of dangerous innovations in the recent past,[88] and for the ecumenical dialogue. Abbot Butler of Downside Abbey, a New Testament scholar who is also a member of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, commented: "We do not want the childish comfort of averting our gaze from the truth, but a truly critical scholarship which will enable us to enter into dialogue with non-Catholic scholars."[89]

Chapter 6: Sacred Scripture in the Life of the Church

Lukas Vischer told the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches in January 1965 that this last chapter is perhaps the most important part of the Constitution.[90] Its purpose is more pastoral than doctrinal, though it does contain important theological affirmations concerning the relation between Scripture and the Church. The formulation of the chapter has been strongly influenced by a schema prepared by the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity under the title "On the Word of God."

Article 21: The Importance of Holy Scripture for the Church. Article twenty-one proposes three reasons for the Church's veneration of Scripture. *a*) The Church receives the bread of life, Jesus Christ, from the table of the Word as well as from the table of the Eucharist. "'Flesh' and 'Word' are the two ways in which the ... incarnate Word

[88]Cf. Fitzmyer, "A Recent Roman Scriptural Controversy."

[89]*La Documentation Catholique* 61 (1964), col. 1422.

[90]Antoine Wenger, *Vatican II: Chronique de la troisième session* (Paris: Éditions du Centurion, 1965), 156.

comes to us and becomes our 'bread'."[91] This unity of Word and Sacrament is manifested in a unique way in the liturgy. Since the time of Trent, Catholic theological reflection has tended to separate Word and Sacrament from one another and has underestimated the role of the Word in the Church. But the reality of revelation as a unity of word and deed possesses the same structure in its representation in the history of the Church through Word and Sacrament. The Council here contributes toward a correction of an all too sacramental concept of the Church. *b*) Scripture, together with Tradition, is the supreme norm of faith. Originally, Scripture was called "canon" because it was the normative measuring stick, the *norma normans* for the faith of the Church. Although the later official preaching of the Church is also a norm for the faith of the members of the Church, it is at the same time a *norma normata*, measured by Scripture interpreted in the Tradition.[92] The Council's statement points to the fact that Scripture is the objective rule of faith in a special way for two reasons: 1) because of the charism of inspiration, Scripture is formally the written Word of God, though it is not as immediately the Word of God as the actually resounding revelatory Word of God or as the substantial Word of God, the Incarnate Logos. Thus, there is an indirect identity between the Word of Scripture and the Word of God in so far as Scripture mediates, presents and allows us to encounter the actually resounding Word of God through the action of the Spirit. 2) Because it has been consigned to writing once and for all, it possesses the immutability and stability needed in a true norm. Therefore, Scripture can and must be the norm and nourishment for the preaching of the Church and for the whole Christian life. This is not meant in the sense that Scripture is merely a dead reference book concerning past facts and early Christian beliefs, but in the sense that when read in faith there occurs living encounter, dialogue and address between God and his children. *c*) The third reason for the Church's veneration of Scripture

[91]Joseph Ratzinger, "Dogmatische Konstitution über die göttliche Offenbarung: Kommentar zum VI. Kapitel," in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche: Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil*, Band II, 572 (author's own translation).

[92]Semmelroth in Semmelroth and Zerwick, *Vatikanum II über das Wort Gottes*, 53.

is the life-giving, i.e., grace-giving power of the biblical Word for the Church. "Scripture assures the communication of the Spirit of Christ to us: to the entire community of believers as well as to each one in particular."[93] In her believing, reading of, listening to, and meditation upon Scripture, the whole Church lives from and grows in the strength of the Word which proceeds from the mouth of God (Mt. 4:4).

Article 22: The Church and Bible Translations. If Scripture is so important for the life of the Church, translations must be prepared in all languages in order to make the word of Scripture as accessible as possible for all. Especially in this article does the *inhaerens vestigiis* of the prologue prove to be a "going forward." In reaction to Protestantism, the Counter-Reformation had actually led to the discouragement of translations into the vernacular and of the reading of the Bible. This narrow point of view is officially corrected here.

The following sentences betray an ecumenical inspiration. The Church is said to have always given a place of honor to both Eastern and Latin translations of the Bible. This is a corrective to the isolation and factual absolutizing of the Latin-Western portion of the Church. Both Eastern and Latin translations are elements of the Church's scriptural interpretation and therefore of its Tradition. However, since the original text has more authority and more weight than any translation, old or new, priority is to be given to translation from the original texts. Finally, the ecumenical openness of the Council is given a concrete application. The recommendation is made that this translation by a return to the original sources which bind both Catholic and non-Catholic Christians be made in common, for a common translation will make possible a common reading and a common understanding of the Word of God which is the source of a common faith.

Article 23: The Apostolic Task of Catholic Biblical Scholars. The next three articles form a unit. They treat of three areas of the Church's use of Scripture: exegetical interpretation of Scripture for

[93]Grillmeier, "Dogmatische Konstitution über die göttliche Offenbarung," 544-545.

pastoral use (article twenty-three), the role of Scripture in the study of theology (article twenty-four), and the religious reading of Scripture by all Christians (article twenty-five).

The article first emphasizes that the entire Church in all its members, as the Bride of the Incarnate Word, and therefore as possessing an inner relationship with Scripture, is involved in the continual effort to grow in the understanding of Scripture. This is also accomplished by a study of the Fathers and the ancient liturgies where the Scriptural understanding of the Church of the past is recorded.

However, in this effort to understand Scripture, the professional exegetes exercise a special function, intimately related to the pastoral concern of the Church to nourish faith and love of God through the service of the Word. The Council gives special emphasis to the present-day need of cooperative efforts between exegetes and systematic theologians to synthesize the results of scientific specialization in a way that will enable pastors to communicate the Scripture effectively as truth of salvation. The goal of scientific exegetical and theological labor is the service of the servants of the Word and the life of the Church. This pastoral emphasis should not be an occasion for the surrender of high scientific standards, but a reminder of the specific orientation of theological science.

The article concludes with a word of encouragement and praise for the exegetes and their work. It is to be read against the background of the accusations made against Catholic biblical scholars during the last ten years and during the Council itself.[94]

Article 24: The Importance of Scripture for Theology. Three images express the central role of Scripture in theology. *a*) Scripture is the permanent foundation on which theology rests. The contents of Scripture are the permanent starting point and support for all theological reflection. All theological labor must begin there and constantly return there.

[94]Cf. Fitzmyer, "A Recent Roman Scriptural Controversy."

Once again, the phrase "together with tradition" has been added. But as J. Leuba notes, this "together with" of Vatican II corresponds to the Protestant affirmation of "together with" at Montreal.[95] "That also for the Churches of the Reformation the *Sola Scriptura* in fact does not exclude but includes the unlocking of Scripture and the determination of its hermeneutical center through the confessional writings, should be a clear indication that ultimately Scripture only exists in some kind of 'together with' Tradition."[96]

b) A more organic image is added to the static image of foundation by calling Scripture the rejuvenating force of living theology. Unless dogmas and traditional statements are continually completed and rethought in the light of the totality of the biblical word, theological sclerosis and dimming of vision is the fate of all theology.

c) A third image that goes back to Leo XIII designates the study of Scripture as the soul of sacred theology. This certainly does not mean that theology should concentrate on Scripture alone and ignore the development that has taken place in the history of the Church. But it emphasizes the preeminence and determinative character of Scripture for all of theology since because of its inspiration it is the Word of God. This means that the biblical message should be studied, reflected upon and questioned in itself, that the themes be unfolded from the perspective of the Bible, that questions be raised in a fresh manner from the Bible, that Scripture have a determining role in the setting of themes and on the emphasis given to each theme in the systematic presentation. The unfolding of the tradition and dogmatic and speculative analysis can only follow from this.

The reference to Scripture as the Word of God in no way denies the fact that Scripture is only Word of God as and in the word of man nor that it includes an element of mediation. It is not equated here with

[95]Leuba, "La Tradition à Montréal et à Vatican II," 483.

[96]Ratzinger, "Dogmatische Konstitution über die göttliche Offenbarung," 576, with reference to Erich Dinkler, "Theologische Aufgaben der ökumenischen Arbeit Heute," *Ökumenische Rundschau* 14 (1965), 123ff.

the unmediated directness of the divine.[97] The Council's intention is to emphasize the unique importance of Scripture as the inspired record of revelation and thus as the basic form of "Tradition" for theology.

Finally, the article looks beyond theology in the strict sense and speaks of the ministry of the word, of catechesis and of all forms of instruction given within or outside the liturgy. The study of Scripture should be the soul of all of these.

Article 25: The Recommendation of the Reading of Scripture. This article draws the practical consequences of all that the Council has said concerning the unique function of Scripture in the Church and makes a pressing admonition that all members of the Church read and study Scripture in a prayerful way. Never before has the Church as clearly placed the Bible at the center of Christian existence as a fundamental form of Christian intercourse with God.

Understandably the admonition is first directed to priests and all other servants of the word in the Church. They must allow themselves to be formed by the Word of God through diligent meditative reading and study lest any of them become, in the words of Augustine, "an empty preacher of the word of God outwardly, who is not a listener to it inwardly."

But the admonition is then extended to all the faithful, especially but not exclusively to the members of religious communities, to learn by frequent reading of Scripture "the excelling knowledge of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:8). "For ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ." Perhaps the Council's recommendation of the meditative reading of Scripture is a pointer toward a solution to the pressing problem of daily meditation among religious.[98]

This contact with Scripture through which Christ becomes effective in us can occur in the liturgy which provides a living commentary on Scripture, in personal Scripture reading or in the framework and with

[97]Ratzinger, "Dogmatische Konstitution über die göttliche Offenbarung," 578.

[98]Semmelroth in Semmelroth and Zerwick, *Vatikanum II über das Wort Gottes*, 58.

the various aids of the Bible movement. But everywhere the goal is never mere intellectual enrichment, but personal dialogue in prayer with the Lord who encounters us through the text.

But since Scripture is the book of the Church and must be read in the spirit of the Church within the life of the Church, pastoral concern should lead the bishops to provide suitable aids for the proper understanding of this treasure.

The final section of the article calls for the preparation and distribution of editions of the Bible for non-Christians. In imitation of the Protestants, the Church here recognizes the missionary value and power of the Bible. "With this a new element has entered into the previously all too hierarchical-institutional concept of Mission: the trust in the self-active power of the Word, that of course can not and should not make the preaching of the Church superfluous but which as a part of the presence of Jesus Christ can carry it among the nations, far beyond the presence of the hierarchical Church."[99]

Article 26: Epilogue. This article is an epilogue to Chapter 6, but it also recalls the theme of the entire Constitution. It recalls the inseparable unity of both Word of God and Body of Christ, Word and Sacrament, as the media of the incarnate Word's active presence in the Church. But it returns also to the opening theme of the prologue, the Word of God in its fullness as the treasure of revelation which has been communicated to man that he might live. All the theological affirmations of this Constitution have this ultimate pastoral purpose: to be an instrument toward "a new surge of spiritual vitality from intensified veneration for God's word, which 'lasts forever' (Is. 40:8)."

Conclusion to Chapter 6. The ecumenical importance of this final chapter can hardly be overestimated. The strong affirmation of the unique position of Scripture in the life of the Church is a remarkable example of the progress made since Trent in the Catholic Church's

[99]Ratzinger, "Dogmatische Konstitution über die göttliche Offenbarung," 580.

understanding and expression of this reality from which it lives. "This text," commented O. Cullmann, "can affect the future more than any other conciliar text" because it places Scripture at the heart of theology and the Church's life.[100] "The presence of God in Scripture is expressed as strongly as has ever occurred even from the Protestant side."[101] "In this [chapter] there are declarations which bring us completely together in our common attitude toward the Bible."[102] Who can say where the deeper appreciation of this treasure by the Catholic Church and the common reading of Scripture, which the chapter encourages, will lead the Churches? The Word of God is not limited to the past. It is an event which occurs anew on the basis of the event of the past through the inspired Scriptures in the Church. The common hearing of this mysterious and inexhaustible Word of God in new circumstances can lead to a more profound understanding of what has been given once and for all and thus illuminate partial interpretations of the past from more inclusive perspectives. This the Churches can await in hopeful searching of the Scriptures, realizing that it can only come from God through a growth in the knowledge of Christ who calls to a unity of faith and its manifestation in love.

CONCLUSION TO THE COMMENTARY

The foundation and key to the other chapters of the Constitution and to the ecumenical hopes the Constitution inspires is the deepened understanding of revelation as primarily a vital interpersonal communion between God and man, as the living Word that the living God addresses to the living Church composed of living members. The following chapters merely draw the consequences from this foundation

[100]Peter Hebblethwaite, "The Coherence of the Council," *The Month* 35 (1966), 48.

[101]Oscar Cullmann, *Vatican Council II: The New Direction* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 86.

[102]Oscar Cullmann, "The Bible in the Council," in *Dialogue on the Way*, ed. George Lindbeck (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1965), 136.

for the reality of Tradition, for the inspiration, truth and function of Scripture, for the relationship between these two modes of transmission of this interpersonal communion. Furthermore, this understanding of revelation paved the way for a reconsideration by Catholic theologians of the relation between revelation and dogma. This has resulted in a position which is far less inflexible than Catholics or Protestants have presumed, and raises hopes for ecumenical progress along a road which had formerly appeared closed.[103] Finally, a sentence of the Decree on Ecumenism which has been called "the most revolutionary" passage of all the schemas of the Council[104] is a direct consequence of the idea of revelation in the first chapter of *Dei Verbum*, even though the Decree on Ecumenism was promulgated before *Dei Verbum*. There it is said that there is a hierarchy among the truths of Catholic teaching, according to their relation to the fundamentals of the Catholic faith (article eleven). But this is true because the object of revelation is one, the mystery of Christ, and therefore each of the particular truths in which this mystery expresses itself can and ought to be understood in its relation to this unique mystery.[105]

The Constitution on Revelation has not said all that could be said about revelation and its transmission, nor did it intend to do so.[106] It has been suggested that in documents such as the Pastoral

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[103]Avery Dulles, "Dogma as an Ecumenical Problem," *Theological Studies* 29 (1968), 397-416.

[104]Oscar Cullmann, "Comments on the Decree on Ecumenism," *The Ecumenical Review* 17 (1965), 94.

[105]de Lubac, "Commentaire du Chapitre I sur la Révélation," 291. See also Patrick O'Connell, "Hierarchy of Truths," in *Cardinal Bea Studies II: The Dublin Papers on Ecumenism*, ed. Pedro S. Achutegui (Manila: Loyola School of Theology, 1972), 83-115.

[106]"The view of revelation proposed in *Dei Verbum* is almost exclusively biblical. This again is a limitation. The Constitution says nothing about how revelation comes to non-Christians, who have no contact with the biblical religions. Nor does it take up the thorny question whether God continues to reveal himself

Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, there are hints of a more comprehensive view of revelation "with greater stress on the secular and cosmic dimensions."[107] However, it cannot be doubted that *Dei Verbum* makes a very real and magnificent advance in Catholic teaching and that it is one of the best and most unified documents produced by the Second Vatican Council.

through the experience of individuals, or the history of the Church, or the example of the Saints. On this last point the Constitution on the Church in its seventh chapter (art. 50, par. 2) is more explicit" (Avery Dulles, "The Constitution on Divine Revelation in Ecumenical Perspective," *American Ecclesiastical Review* 154 [1966], 230).

[107] Avery Dulles, *Revelation Theology:* A *History* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 157-158.

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RESURRECTION FAITH TODAY

Joseph J. Smith, S.J.

In 1964, W. Marxsen published a short essay which triggered an intense discussion among German Protestants concerning the understanding of the Resurrection faith.[1] Marxsen's essay soon influenced Catholic theology, and the discussion spread to German Catholic circles.[2] In these circumstances, the German bishops wrote a letter "to all who are commissioned by the Church to preach the faith," dated September 22, 1967. The letter rejected an extreme interpretation of the Resurrection and stated: "The confession of the Resurrection of Jesus as a real event (*wirkliches Ereignis*) necessarily belongs to the Christian faith and cannot be understood as a time-conditioned interpretation of an inner-historical, inner-worldly or inner-human

[1]Willi Marxsen, *Die Auferstehung Jesu als historisches und als theologisches Problem* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1964); translated in *The Significance of the Message of the Resurrection for Faith in Jesus Christ*, ed. Charles F. D. Moule (London: SCM Press, 1968).

[2]Heinz R. Schlette, *Epiphanie als Geschichte* (Munich: Kösel, 1966), 67-75 (all translations from this source are the author's own); Anton Vögtle, "Epiphanie als Geschichte (Kritik an H. R. Schlette)," *Oberrheinisches Pastoralblatt* 68 (1967), 9-14; Jacob Kremer, *Das älteste Zeugnis von der Auferstehung Christi* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1966), all translations from this source are the author's own.

experience, which can at other times be expressed differently."[3] The letter of the bishops did not mention any theologian by name. It did not even say that any theologian expressly taught what it rejected. Rather, in a time of confusion, the letter set a limit beyond which the discussion of German Catholics could not go. It did not seek to end all discussion of the meaning of the Resurrection faith. What then have the theologians been saying?

SURVEY OF THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS

BULTMANN

The present discussion concerning the ideas of Marxsen must be seen against the background of R. Bultmann's treatment of the Resurrection. The latter presupposes a world view in which the universe is a closed system of natural causality which excludes the possibility of supernatural influences or direct interventions of God. A miraculous action of God in the world is impossible. Therefore any biblical statement implying such an action (e.g. the resurrection of a dead man) is a mythical statement. Myth is "the use of imagery to express the otherworldly in terms of this world, and the divine in terms of human life; the other side in terms of this side."[4]

The New Testament presents the event of Christ as a mythical event in mythical language. Here the historical and mythical are intermingled. The historical person of Jesus of Nazareth is said to be at the same time a pre-existent divine being, and the historical event of the cross is linked to the message of the Resurrection and exaltation to heaven and the legend of the empty tomb.

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[3]"Jesus ist auferstanden," *Hochland* 60 (1968), 303 (author's own translation).

[4]Rudolf Bultmann, "Nouveau Testament et mythologie," in Rudolf Bultmann, *L'Interpretation du Nouveau Testament* (Paris: Aubier, 1955), 148 (all translations from this source are the author's own).

Bultmann distinguishes various forms of this Resurrection message. In the beginning, the apostles preached only faith in the risen one. This faith was based on visions which the disciples interpreted as the work of God. Later the tradition acquired the legends of the empty tomb and of the graphic appearances. These explain the event mythically, as if it were a return to the life of this world.

The content of these objectifying representations must be abandoned. The mythical language must be demythologized by asking what is the understanding of existence it expresses. This is the meaning which the New Testament intends to express in its mythical affirmations. The mythical language used to present the event of Christ simply intends to express the importance of the historical figure of Jesus, more precisely His importance as a figure of salvation and as event of salvation.[5] Ultimately everything revolves around the question of the interpretation of the cross and the Resurrection.

The objectifying representations of the New Testament present the cross of Christ as a mythical event: the pre-existing, incarnate Son of God who is without sin has been crucified. He constitutes the sacrifice whose blood expiates our sins, etc. What is meant by this mythical language? When the New Testament exalts the historical event of the cross to cosmic dimensions, it is simply expressing the significance of the cross as a historical event, i.e., that the believer has been delivered by the cross of Christ from the domination of sin; that by allowing Jesus to be crucified, God has erected the cross for us, so that we can receive the cross of Christ as our own cross and allow ourselves to be crucified with Christ. Thus the saving event is an act of God, which is not an event of the past, but the eschatological event in time and beyond time; for, understood in its significance (i.e., understood in faith), it is continually present, is an ever-present reality which establishes the basis of human life.

The cross of Christ, as an event of salvation, has its origin in the fact

[5]Bultmann, "Nouveau Testament et mythologie," 173.

of the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. But in its historical (*geschichtliche*) significance it is "the judgment of divine grace pronounced over the whole world affecting every human being, liberating man from himself as a being belonging to the world, and setting him free to be a being belonging to God. The myth has no other function than to translate this meaning of the event related by history."[6]

The Resurrection narratives and every other mention of the Resurrection are nothing more than an attempt to convey the meaning of the cross. The content of the message is not an event which can be proven historically and which occurred the morning of Easter in Jerusalem. Rather, the content of the message is the faith of the disciples—worked by God—in the unique value of the death of Christ for us. To believe in the Resurrection is not to believe in an incredible miracle, the revivification of a dead man. It is to believe that the cross of Christ places us in a new situation. The assertion of the Resurrection is a reflective judgment which expresses the fact "that His death is not just an ordinary human death, but the judgment and salvation of the world, depriving death of its power. This is the truth contained in the affirmation that the crucified did not remain in death but has risen."[7]

Faith in the Resurrection is really the same thing as faith in the saving efficacy of the cross—in the cross as event of salvation. So far as one can speak, in the sense of Bultmann, of an Easter event alongside the cross, historically one can only grasp the arising of the Easter faith in the disciples.

But for us, the cross as saving event, and therefore the Resurrection, is only present in the word of preaching. Christ, the crucified and risen one, encounters us in the word of preaching and nowhere else. It would be an error to wish to legitimate and justify the content of preaching by a study of its historical origin. All questions concerning the historicity of the Easter event are superfluous and can be harmful by objectivizing

[6]Bultmann, "Nouveau Testament et mythologie," 174-176.

[7]Bultmann, "Nouveau Testament et mythologie," 177.

the event and destroying its true existential meaning. True Easter faith is the comprehending faith in the word of the kerygma.[8]

Bultmann, therefore, accepts the proposition that Jesus has risen in the kerygma. Properly understood, it is perfectly correct.

> It presupposes that the kerygma itself is an eschatological event, and it expresses the fact that Jesus is really present in the kerygma, that it is *His* word which involves the hearer in the kerygma. If that is the case, then all speculations concerning the modes of being of the risen Jesus, all the narratives of the empty tomb and all the Easter legends, whatever elements of historical fact they may contain, and as true as they may be in their symbolic form, are of no consequence. To believe in the Christ present in the kerygma is the meaning of the Easter faith.[9]

Marxsen

Unlike Bultmann, and like many disciples of Bultmann, Marxsen does not consider the question whether the Resurrection is a positive event to be superfluous. "Does it mean anything to say that Jesus is risen, if at the same time to declare the resurrection of Jesus as an actual event is unimportant?"[10]

Marxsen finds that the primary datum beyond which historical analysis cannot continue its inquiry consists in the claim of the apostles to have seen Jesus who was crucified. On the basis of this vision they then by a process of reflective interpretation, and utilizing for this purpose the concept of the resurrection of the dead from the apocalyptic tradition, arrived at the statement: Jesus has been raised by God; He is risen. At that time they naturally also believed that they were

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[8]Bultmann, "Nouveau Testament et mythologie," 180.

[9]Rudolf Bultmann, *Das Verhältnis der urchristlichen Botschaft zum historischen Jesus* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag, 1960), 27 (author's own translation).

[10]Willi Marxsen, "The Resurrection of Jesus As an Historical and Theological Problem," in Moule, *The Significance of the Message of the Resurrection for Faith in Jesus Christ*, 19.

speaking of an event which had really taken place, i.e., the Resurrection. But today we can *no longer* speak so directly of the Resurrection as an *event.* We must simply say: we are concerned with an interpretative statement made use of by those who reflected on what had happened to them (at that time). If today we ask in *historical* terms whether Jesus is risen, we can only reply: that cannot be established.[11]

Are we bound to this interpretation today? Marxsen emphatically answers *No!,* for he finds that right from the beginning the experience of the appearance of Jesus (not of the risen one—this designation is only the result of reflection[12]) was also interpreted in a different way. The experience of the appearance was pondered, at first mainly, later almost exclusively, with the help of the interpretative derivation "resurrection." But this interpretative derivation was not the only possible one. It is not so closely connected with the experience that it cannot be separated from it.[13]

In fact, when Paul spoke of what happened to him (Gal. 1:15; 1 Cor. 9:1), he did not use the established Resurrection terminology. He spoke of his Damascus experience as a revealing, a seeing, or an appearing of the Son of God, Jesus, our Lord, or else Christ—but never of the risen one.[14] Furthermore, it is clear that "on the basis of the appearances there existed both the community (more than five-hundred brethren) and its oversight by Peter, the 'office' of the Twelve and the office (not to be identified with it!) of the apostles, as

[11]Marxsen, "The Resurrection of Jesus As an Historical and Theological Problem," 30-31.

[12]Marxsen, "The Resurrection of Jesus As an Historical and Theological Problem," 34.

[13]Marxsen, "The Resurrection of Jesus As an Historical and Theological Problem," 32.

[14]Marxsen, "The Resurrection of Jesus As an Historical and Theological Problem," 23.

well as—later—the oversight by James."[15] Marxsen concludes that the formulas show that both the setting up of the community as well as the reasons given for functioning within it were traced back to a vision of Jesus after His crucifixion. This means that what supplies the real basis of the community and the functions within it is the fact not of the Resurrection itself, but of Jesus' appearances. But if the appearances of Jesus on the one hand led to setting up the community and on the other hand also brought into being a function within it, then these are likewise interpretative derivations, for they were originally connected with the appearances and seemed to derive from them (cf. 1 Cor. 9:1; Gal. 1:15f.; Mt. 28:16ff.; Jn. 20:19-23; Acts 10:40-42).[16]

Thus the experience of the appearances came to be spoken of in two ways with the aid of two interpretative derivations. One looked back in time (reflective) and furnished a statement about a person: He is risen. The other looked forward to the consequences of the experience (anticipatory) and brought to expression a function brought into being by the experience. The content of the function springing from the vision is that the purpose of Jesus is continued; Jesus' kerygma continues to be preached; He still comes today.[17]

In this way, Marxsen has arrived by another route to Bultmann's "Jesus rose into the kerygma," even though he does not agree with the terminology. Rather, it should be expressed: "Jesus is present in the kerygma of His witnesses."[18]

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[15]Marxsen, "The Resurrection of Jesus As an Historical and Theological Problem," 33.

[16]Marxsen, "The Resurrection of Jesus As an Historical and Theological Problem," 34-35.

[17]Marxsen, "The Resurrection of Jesus As an Historical and Theological Problem," 38-39.

[18]Marxsen, "The Resurrection of Jesus As an Historical and Theological Problem," 37-38.

These two interpretative derivations, in the opinion of Marxsen, once existed relatively independent of one another, side by side. Later they were combined, permeated one another, and formed one sequence: Resurrection (appearance)-mission. But from the beginning the experience of the appearance is found in two explanatory contexts, each of which points in a different direction. Marxsen holds that the retrospective interpretative derivation (He is risen) is essentially secondary and only gives us information concerning the belief of those who carried out this process of reflection, not information about matters of fact.[19] This belief, summed up in the statement "Jesus was raised from the dead by God," can only become relevant to others when it is deciphered and re-expressed in the plain language of function: His "purpose" did not come to an end with His death, but still holds good today. That means that for us the statement "He is the risen one" is uninteresting unless we say at the same time He is the risen one "because he (identical with the earthly one) still *comes* today with the same (old) claim." But this means that we no longer need to accept the concept of "the risen one" unreservedly, but must rather speak of the "living one."[20]

Thus the raising of Jesus is not the fundamental datum of Christianity. Jesus was the "datum": His words and deeds. Jesus was experienced in His earthly ministry as an anticipation of the *eschaton*, as a divine event, as the one who brought the distant God near. But He was crucified, and this divine event, bound up with Him, was finished. But then He had been seen—and the divine event bound up with Him was brought into being once again.[21]

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[19]Marxsen, "The Resurrection of Jesus As an Historical and Theological Problem," 39.

[20]Marxsen, "The Resurrection of Jesus As an Historical and Theological Problem," 40.

[21]Marxsen, "The Resurrection of Jesus As an Historical and Theological Problem," 47; cf. 48.

To make the raising from the dead fundamental is to turn into history what was the result of an interpretation. Marxsen holds that this was no doubt intelligible, perhaps even necessary, at that time. But it is forbidden to us in the present day.[22]

Therefore the question of the Resurrection is not that of an event which occurred after Good Friday, but that of the earthly Jesus and the question inseparably linked with it, of how His purpose later became a reality of experience which can still be experienced today in preaching. Here I encounter Jesus' offer, and when it really touches me I know that He is alive.[23]

Pannenberg and Wilckens

Wolfhart Pannenberg and Ulrich Wilckens are the present-day proponents of a position opposed to that of Marxsen. They emphasize with Marxsen the importance of concrete events which took place when the disciples were in the company of Jesus during His ministry: His words and actions, His preaching, and His unique claim that the final action of God in the last days was to be found in His own acts.[24] But contrary to the view of Marxsen, they insist that the entire ministry of Jesus is related to the question concerning the future ratification of Jesus' claim by God. Precisely this claim was called into question by the death of Jesus. The authentication of Jesus' claim and person

[22]Marxsen, "The Resurrection of Jesus As an Historical and Theological Problem," 48.

[23]Marxsen, "The Resurrection of Jesus As an Historical and Theological Problem," 50.

[24]Ulrich Wilckens, "The Tradition-History of the Resurrection of Jesus," in Moule, *The Significance of the Message of the Resurrection for Faith in Jesus Christ*, 62f.; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Grundzüge der Christologie* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1966), 47ff. (all translations from this source are the author's own).

was only given through the Resurrection appearances.[25] On the basis of the appearances the disciples were able to say that Jesus had been raised, and they were only able to say this because they assumed the tradition of the Jewish hope of the resurrection witnessed to in the Apocalypse of Isaiah, the Book of Daniel, the Apocalypse of Baruch, and Ezra. Thus with Marxsen they can say that the statement "Jesus is risen" is an interpretative statement.[26]

But contrary to Marxsen they insist that

> the knowledge of this event is the purpose of the appearances of Jesus; for it provided for them the basis of the knowledge that Jesus' preaching had therefore by this act of God already received its authentication. As a consequence, they themselves had the right to go on preaching His gospel, and at the same time, in the context of the same appearances, had explicitly received their own commission. But the essential significance of the raising of Jesus was that it was the eschatological confirmation of the authority or truth of the preaching of Jesus.[27]

In direct opposition to Marxsen, Wilckens affirms that the dominant concern of the earliest preaching of the Resurrection was not that Jesus who had died had come to life, but that Jesus who had died had now had His preaching eschatologically authenticated by His resurrection.[28] Wilckens concludes: "Consequently I must affirm, against Marxsen, the thesis that what is at issue is the event of the resurrection of Jesus itself, and what according to Marxsen is the direct and true sense of the primitive Christian proclamation of the resurrection, the

[25]Pannenberg, *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 60-61; Wilckens, "The Tradition-History of the Resurrection of Jesus," 64-65.

[26]Wilckens, "The Tradition-History of the Resurrection of Jesus," 65-66; Pannenberg, *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 89ff.

[27]Wilckens, "The Tradition-History of the Resurrection of Jesus," 66; cf. Pannenberg, *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 62.

[28]Wilckens, "The Tradition-History of the Resurrection of Jesus," 67.

continuation of Jesus' 'purpose', must be regarded as the effect of the resurrection."[29] Nor does he agree that it can be said that "Jesus rose into the kerygma." Rather, it must be said that "Jesus rose into the final judgment of God." This event is the whole basis of all early preaching.[30]

Consequently, in the position of Pannenberg and Wilckens, this apocalyptic interpretation of the appearances is not, as for Marxsen, an interpretative derivation which could or even must be replaced by another, but is an irreplaceable interpretation even for us today.[31] One can not only speak of the visions of the disciples, but also of the appearances of the risen Jesus. Pannenberg grants that language concerning the resurrection of the dead is metaphorical and symbolic, since the intended reality is withdrawn from the experience of man who lives on this side of the grave. The true nature of the event is still hidden from us.[32] Yet, Pannenberg affirms that whether or not Jesus was raised from the dead is a historical question insofar as it is an inquiry into what did or did not happen at a certain time from a certain place. The temporal location of the event is given in the relative exactness of the traditional formula "after three days." He accepts the essential historicity of the empty tomb, and thus the relationship to space is already given. Pannenberg concedes that the Resurrection-reality is not material and thus nonspatial. But the event of the Resurrection, in contrast to the reality which results from this event, has to do with the transition from our earthly reality to the Resurrection reality, which is no longer locatable in space. Thus, at least its initial point must be sought in the historical Jesus, which was located in space, and thus

[29]Wilckens, "The Tradition-History of the Resurrection of Jesus," 70.

[30]Wilckens, "The Tradition-History of the Resurrection of Jesus," 70.

[31]Pannenberg, in *Theology As History*, eds. James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 266.

[32]Pannenberg, *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 70, 73.

far at least it is related to space. "If it really took place, it took place in Palestine and not, for instance, in America."[33]

Schlette

The Catholic theologian Heinz Robert Schlette has written that he "hopes to have learned from" the writings of Marxsen. However, his position concerning the Resurrection is not exactly the same as Marxsen's. Schlette's ideas concerning the Resurrection must be seen against the background of his conception of "epiphany as history."

Epiphany is the element in an event which makes possible the interpretation of the event. It is the communication of a meaning through a historical event. Epiphany is an occurrence taking place purely in the dimension of the historical, but at the same time making possible and demanding an interpretation and mediating an insight which could not be seen empirically by everybody in the event in time and space, but only by faith.[34]

Schlette applies this concept of epiphany to the event of Jesus. The occurrence or event of Jesus of Nazareth is the exemplary instance or high point of epiphany. The whole life and claim of Jesus were such an epiphany. But the epiphany was not immediately comprehensible and interpreted. It could only be correctly interpreted in retrospect after His death.[35]

What occurred at Easter? Schlette confesses candidly: the exegetes do not know; nobody knows. "I am of the opinion that from methodical grounds it is completely impossible to make historically certain statements concerning what occurred after the death of Jesus and led to the Resurrection faith. I also think there is little prospect that this

[33]Pannenberg, *Theology As History*, 266; cf. 127-128; cf. idem, *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 95f.

[34]Heinz R. Schlette, *Epiphanie als Geschichte*, 38, 77.

[35]Schlette, *Epiphanie als Geschichte*, 67.

uncertainty will ever be eliminated."[36] He is convinced that the sources give us no definite information whether the faith in the Resurrection was initiated through definite happenings (appearances, visions, etc.) or whether such happenings could not have taken place. He feels that if we accept the principles of exegetical interpretation generally accepted today, we must conclude: "From the beginning the Christians did not say that the grave was empty and that they saw Jesus risen again before them. The Resurrection faith manifests itself to be an interpretative derivation, i.e., the interpretation of a definite experience."[37]

What was the nature of the experience which was interpreted as resurrection? Schlette says that this cannot be answered historically. He therefore proposes an interpretation which leaves undecided what is uncertain, and yet at the same time seeks to visualize what historical experiences legitimized: the interpretative speech concerning resurrection for those who already believed within the horizon of the life of Israel. He visualizes the events after Christ's death in this way.

After Jesus' death the path of the community of Jesus was not everywhere the same. Individuals and groups had a variety of experiences. Gradually, from conversations, in the thoughts of individuals, at the meals at which they again gathered, the followers of Jesus began to understand more and more what they had in Him, how significant and unique Jesus was, how new and unconditional were the attitudes which He had presented to them. They acquired the conviction that they had to take up the "purpose" of Jesus and remain true to it. "It appeared ever more unthinkable to them that this Jesus should be as dead and gone as Abraham, David, and Jeremiah. When they speak of Him, when they sit together and eat and drink, they believe He is with them. Yahweh who had sent Him allows Him even now to be living in their midst."[38]

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[36]Heinz R. Schlette, *Kirche Unterwegs* (Freiburg: Walter, 1966), 120 (author's own translation); cf. idem, *Epiphanie als Geschichte*, 67.

[37]Schlette, *Epiphanie als Geschichte*, 69.

[38]Schlette, *Epiphanie als Geschichte*, 70-71.

Schlette leaves open the possibility that in this basic mood signs and occurrences took place which were interpreted as pointers from God, special unique and unrepeatable signs. But—and this is what he wanted to show—even without such signs it is comprehensible that an atmosphere arose in which the experience ripened: Jesus and His purpose are not finished; we must cling to His word and Himself, if we want to stand on the side of Yahweh.[39]

In some such way, the event "Jesus" was better and better understood. It appeared as the greatest epiphany from God and was now interpreted with the words and conceptions of the Israelite hope: He brought the new creation, the truth and glory of God; with Him began the eschatological time; He was the new Adam, the messianic Son of David, and now He is living and has been enthroned by Yahweh as Kyrios, etc. "And very early—closely intertwined with all this—appeared the most unheard-of and boldest interpretation of all: God raised Him; He is truly risen."[40]

Perhaps the weakest point of Schlette's construction is its foundation: the acceptance as a fact that critical exegesis has reached no certain conclusions concerning the content and origin of the Easter faith. According to most exegetes, even Marxsen, to whom Schlette appeals for his total conception of epiphany as history, at least it is historically demonstrable that the apostles were convinced that they had "seen" Jesus and that they concluded on the basis of this seeing that Jesus had risen.[41]

Furthermore, as we have seen, there exists a plurality of views among evangelical theologians concerning the interpretation of the New Testament records concerning the Resurrection. Why then is one exegete (Marxsen) taken so seriously as to maintain categorically

[39]Schlette, *Epiphanie als Geschichte*, 71.

[40]Schlette, *Epiphanie als Geschichte*, 72-73.

[41]Hans Ebert, "Die Krise des Osterglaubens," *Hochland* 60 (1968), 312 (all translations from this source are the author's own).

that "from the beginning the Christians did not speak of the empty grave and of having seen Jesus risen before them"?

Even what is proposed by exegetes is not pure exegesis. H. G. Geyer affirms that when Marxsen asserts that the content of the preaching which was begun by the appearances of Jesus after His crucifixion is neither the Resurrection experience, that is, "the 'experience of the appearance of Jesus' itself, nor a truth of which this was the very first manifestation," then he is obliged to advance theses which it seems very difficult to verify exegetically.[42] J. Kremer agrees:

> What Marxsen proposes are interesting speculations, but they have no sufficient foundation in the text. One can at the most take such speculations into consideration as hypotheses. But then they must also be characterized as such unproven hypotheses. Above all, they should not be used as foundations of exegetical and theological statements before they are confirmed by thorough investigation.[43]

Conclusion

This survey of opinions concerning the Easter faith confirms the observation of H. Ebert: "The apparently so simple statement 'Jesus has risen' is anything but simple."[44] Over a decade ago R. Marlé had commented: "We must concede that it is not easy to give an account of the fact, or better, of the mystery of the Resurrection which our faith confesses."[45] The question today in theology is not the question whether Jesus has risen or not, but rather what "risen" means for us today. In 1967, Geyer, at the evangelical *Kirchentag* at Hanover, gave

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[42]Hans-Georg Geyer, "The Resurrection of Jesus Christ: A Survey of the Debate in Present Day Theology," in Moule, *The Significance of the Message of the Resurrection for Faith in Jesus Christ*, 123-124.

[43]Kremer, *Das älteste Zeugnis von der Auferstehung Christi*, 121.

[44]Ebert, "Die Krise des Osterglaubens," 313.

[45]René Marlé, *Bultmann et l'interpretation du Nouveau Testament* (Paris: Aubier, 1956), 170 (author's own translation).

the assurance that in evangelical theology today there was no theologian who simply denied the traditional proposition of the Resurrection.[46] However, they are asking what the statement means for us in the light of today's understanding of man and the world.

In 1967, the German bishops expressed for German Catholics the limits of such a reinterpretation: "The confession of the resurrection of Jesus as a real event belongs ... necessarily to the Christian faith." However, this statement is rather general. It appears that it is left to theologians to clarify the question, what kind of "real event" the Resurrection was. This is the point at issue in the discussions among Catholic theologians. Did the real event of the Resurrection imply that the body of Jesus left the tomb, or is it sufficient to say that from the moment of His death on the cross Jesus became a new creation, clothed in a new heaven-made body which had no continuity with the one laid in the grave?

In the light of the diversity of opinion among theologians concerning the Easter faith, it seems reasonable to ask: Can we know anything definite concerning the content and basis of the Easter faith? What can we actually know concerning the Easter events?

INVESTIGATION OF THE EVIDENCE

1 Cor. 15:1-11

From the historico-critical point of view, Paul's testimony here has precedence over all the other testimonies of the New Testament, for in the literary sense it is the oldest.[47] The first letter to the Corinthians

[46]*Herder Correspondence* 4 (1967), 287.

[47]However, it would be well to keep in mind continually the warning of Wilckens against allowing our judgment on the whole of the history of the tradition to be influenced by the history of the literary material to an extent greater than the latter permits. We must not act "as though this *text*, which is the

was written by Paul in 56/57, about twenty-five years after the death of Jesus. It is generally agreed today that at least in 1 Cor. 15:3-5 we are dealing with material from kerygmatic and catechetical tradition which had a fixed form before Paul made use of it. Most would say that the passage is a stereotyped formula from its repetition, rhythm, and parallelism. Non-Pauline phrases and Semitic formulations point to an Aramaic or Hebrew original behind the present Greek text.[48] Wilckens formulates the cautious conclusion:

> It was very probably in use before A.D. 50 in Antioch, and perhaps even before A.D. 40 in Damascus, which was Paul's first home community. But this means it is perfectly possible that this formula was common to the oldest missionary communities of the Diaspora and goes back to the circle of the "Hellenists" (Stephen, etc.), who in their turn (whatever the wording may have been) learned it from the primitive community.[49]

Kremer, who has perhaps made the most thorough Catholic study of this passage, is more categorical: "It is admitted today that there is question here of an ancient formula transmitted to Paul when he was converted (about 35) or at his visit to Jerusalem (about 38) or at the latest at the beginning of the 40's."[50] Verse 11 explicitly mentions that this traditional formula agrees with the whole apostolic tradition, i.e.,

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oldest we possess, represented the earliest stage of the tradition, and as though the testimonies to the resurrection in the gospel, which are unquestionably more recent in the literary sense, should be judged on the basis of 1 Cor. 15" (Wilckens, "The Tradition-History of the Resurrection of Jesus," 56-57).

[48]Hans von Campenhausen, *Der Ablauf der Osterereignisse und das leere Grab*, 3rd ed. (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1966), 9f. (all translations from this source are the author's own); Ferdinand Hahn, *Christologische Hoheitstitel*, 3rd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 199-200 (all translations from this source are the author's own); Berthold Klappert, "Zur Frage des semitischen oder griechischen Ur textes von I Cor 15, 3-5," *New Testament Studies* 13 (1966-67), 168-173.

[49]Wilckens, "The Tradition-History of the Resurrection of Jesus," 50.

[50]Jacob Kremer, "La resurrección de Cristo en I Cor 15, 3-8," *Selecciones de teología* 6 (1967), 210 (author's own translation).

that of Jerusalem in particular.[51] "Whoever, despite all this, wants to doubt its trustworthiness, must also doubt everything that is handed on in the New Testament—and more than this."[52]

In four clauses, the formula speaks of the death, burial, raising, and appearances of "the Christ."

1) " ... that He was buried." Agreement seems to have been reached that the clause "that He was buried" belongs in the context of His death and primarily affirms that the fact of His dying was final. It confirms that He died.[53] There is no agreement that this phrase together with the following phrase, "and that He was raised to life on the third day," implies the fact of the empty tomb. Certainly, Paul does not explicitly mention the empty tomb, nor does he mention the witnesses of the empty tomb. Wilckens concedes that "Paul himself obviously has no concrete knowledge about Jesus' grave, nor of the finding of the empty tomb."[54] Kremer will only affirm that we cannot exclude here the *possibility* of an implicit affirmation of the tradition of the empty tomb, at least for the original formula.[55] Wilckens will grant that "this statement perhaps signifies that certain traditions about Jesus' grave existed in the place from which the formula originally derived its material." He further insists that 1 Cor. 15:4a "can in no way be regarded, as has frequently been the case, as an argument that at the time of the writing of 1 Cor. the stories about the burial of Jesus and

[51]Gerhard Delling, "The Resurrection of Jesus and Its Significance for Faith in Jesus Christ," in Moule, *The Significance of the Message of the Resurrection for Faith in Jesus Christ*, 78-79.

[52]Campenhausen, *Der Ablauf der Osterereignisse und das leere Grab*, 10-11.

[53]Wilckens, "The Tradition-History of the Resurrection of Jesus," 57; Kremer, "La resurrección de Cristo en I Cor 15, 3-8," 210; Delling, "The Resurrection of Jesus and Its Significance for Faith in Jesus Christ," 81; Campenhausen, *Der Ablauf der Osterereignisse und das leere Grab*, 21.

[54]Wilckens, "The Tradition-History of the Resurrection of Jesus," 58.

[55]Kremer, *Das älteste Zeugnis*, 37-39, 58.

the finding of his empty tomb, which are recorded in Mark 15 and 16, could not yet have existed as such,"[56] and despite the contrary view of Grass,[57] Brändle,[58] and Seidensticker,[59] Campenhausen and others would seem to be correct in their assertion that even if Paul knew of no definite report of an empty tomb, he more probably assumed that there had been a true transformation and glorification of the dead body and thus also an "emptying" of the grave.[60] "The notion that a man might be 'spiritually' raised while his body lay on in the tomb would have seemed to the Jew an absurdity. In whatever form the Resurrection was first proclaimed by the apostles, it must have implied an empty sepulchre."[61]

It is often objected that Paul's notion of the risen body was radically different from the ordinary Jewish notion, that he emphasizes that the resurrection body is not a body of flesh but a spiritual body or a body of glory (1 Cor. 15:44; Phil. 3:21). Furthermore, in 1 Cor. 15:50 Paul insists that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." Brändle, following Grass, insists that in the two Corinthian epistles (2 Cor. 5:1-10 and 1 Cor. 15:35-53) Paul no longer promises a reawakening from the dead, but a new kind of existence after death: it will be a

[56]Wilckens, "The Tradition-History of the Resurrection of Jesus," 57-58.

[57]Hans Grass, *Ostergeschehen und Osterberichte*, 3rd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), 146-173.

[58]Max Brändle, "Müsste das Grab Jesu leer sein?" *Orientierung* 31 (1967), 108-112 (all translations from this source are the author's own); cf. idem, "Did Jesus' Tomb Have to Be Empty?" *Theology Digest* 16 (1968), 18-21.

[59]Philipp Seidensticker, "Das antiochenische Glaubensbekenntnis I Cor 15,3-7 im Lichte seiner Traditionsgeschichte," *Theologie und Glaube* 57 (1967), 286-323.

[60]Campenhausen, *Der Ablauf der Osterereignisse und das leere Grab*, 20-21 and the discussion in n. 67, 60.

[61]John A. T. Robinson, "Resurrection," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* IV, ed. George A. Buttrick, et al. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 46.

bodily existence, but the body of the renewed existence stems not from thegrave but from heaven. He then draws the conclusion: "So when Paul thinks of Jesus risen, no empty tomb swims into his ken at all."[62]

The first thing to note is that it is risky to draw a conclusion concerning the body of Jesus from what Paul expressly says concerning Christians at the Parousia. With Pannenberg we must insist that "the empty grave of Jesus, if it should prove to be a historical fact, belongs to the particularity of the destiny of Jesus, who precisely unlike other dead people would not have lain in His grave for many years and corrupted, but after a short time would have been 'transformed'...."[63]

But secondly, even Paul's conception of the new body of the Christian is not as radically different from all Jewish ideas as Grass and others maintain. Certainly he did not retain the hope of a crassly material resurrection of the old body which was the content of the popular hope. But he does indicate that he believes the spiritual body will be produced by a transformation of the physical body (or what is left of it—according to Jewish ideas, the bones in the grave or the one indestructible bone).[64] He wrote: "We are not all going to die, but we shall *all* be changed" (1 Cor. 15:51). "It is this perishable and mortal nature ... that must put on immortality. And it is essential to the argument that the body of Jesus should have undergone such a metamorphosis."[65]

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[62]Brändle, "Did Jesus' Tomb Have to Be Empty?", 20-21.

[63]Pannenberg, *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 97.

[64]Walter Künneth, *The Theology of the Resurrection* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1965), 94, n. 52; C.F.D. Moule, "St. Paul and Dualism: The Pauline Conception of Resurrection," *New Testament Studies* 12 (1965-66), 109.

[65]George Caird, *The Gospel of Luke* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963), 255; cf. Lucien Cerfaux, *The Christian in the Theology of St. Paul* (London: Chapman, 1967), 183-184. Brändle can interpret 1 Cor. 15:35-53 to mean that in Paul's mind, "the resurrection body has nothing in common with the corpse that was carried to the grave" (Brändle, "Müsste das Grab Jesu leer sein?", 111) because he interprets this passage in the light of 2 Cor. 5:1-10. For both Brändle and Grass (Grass, *Ostergeschehen und Osterberichte*, 155ff.), this is the decisive text for their argument

2) " ... that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." The statement in v. 4b concerning His raising signifies that God has acted upon Jesus in raising Him. The word "raise" is a metaphor to express something of which we do not have direct experience. From the analogy of sleeping and awakening, the closest representation of the Resurrection would be that of a revivification of the corpse. But the early Church did not understand this metaphor in the sense of a simple return to the life of this world.[66] It signified the passage of the whole reality of Jesus of Nazareth into the life and condition of existence of God.

Both the meaning and the origin of the expression "on the third day" are disputed.[67] Those who deny the dependability of the Gospel

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that Paul did not reckon with a transformation of the corpse of Jesus and an empty tomb. In the latter passage, Paul states that when we die "there is a house built by God for us, an everlasting house not made by human hands, in the heavens" (v. 1). They interpret this to mean that when we die we lose our earthly body and are in a state of nakedness. But this nakedness will be covered by a new and heavenly body. They conclude that Paul had the same idea concerning the lot of Jesus. Unfortunately, this text is one of the most difficult texts to interpret in the Pauline letters. Feuillet has exposed and criticized four of the most current interpretations and then has given a fifth which he prefers (André Feuillet, "La demeure céleste et la destinée des chrétiens," *Recherches de Science Religiense* 44 [1956], 161-192, 360-402). This text, therefore, is a shaky foundation on which to build the eschatology of Paul. Moreover, there is reason to believe that "the heavenly dwelling is the glorious body of Christ considered as the 'first fruits' of the new creation, i.e., inasmuch as virtually including the glorious body of all Christians" (Feuillet, "La demeure céleste et la destinée des chrétiens," 377-378; cf. 378-402; also cf. John A. T. Robinson, *The Body* [London: SCM Press, 1953], 75-78). Therefore, while Grass and Brändle have perhaps shown that the position defended here concerning the presuppositions of Paul about the body of Jesus is not incontestable, the position defended here appears to be more probable than that proposed by Grass and Brändle. Cf. Campenhausen, *Der Ablauf der Osterereignisse und das leere Grab*, 20-21 and the literature cited.

[66]Kremer, "La resurrección de Cristo en I Cor 15,3-8," 210; Pannenberg, *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 70-71.

[67]Wilckens, "The Tradition-History of the Resurrection of Jesus," 58; Campenhausen, *Der Ablauf der Osterereignisse und das leere Grab*, 11.

tradition concerning the discovery of the empty tomb on the third day see in the phrase merely a theological and scriptural interpretation of the Resurrection, perhaps in the light of Hos. 6:2.[68] Others would agree with Delling: "the term 'on the third day' is evidently associated from the first with the announcement of the fact of the resurrection. The discovery of the empty tomb is firmly associated with the third day according to the synoptic tradition, and this is the basis of the catechetical statement 'raised on the third day'."[69] They would argue that "it can hardly have been taken from Scripture alone. For there is scarcely a text which of itself had to be understood in this sense."[70]

Seidensticker, however, has suggested that we should give up seeking an individual text in the Old Testament to which the phrase refers. He points out that the expression "the third day" is frequently used in the Old Testament not as an exact determination of time, but in a symbolic-theological meaning.[71] It is used at decisive points in salvation history to indicate a turning point that separates the old from the new, brings punishment to the blasphemer but justice, health, and life to God's faithful.[72] This would be the theological background of the phrase in v. 4b: "on the third day according to the Scriptures."

Seidensticker's further suggestion that this phrase meant nothing more than this originally and had no chronological reference is less probable in the light of the conclusions we will come to later concerning the Gospel tradition of the discovery of the empty tomb. He is correct in suggesting that the foundation for the use of the phrase is

[68]Cf. Grass, *Ostergeschehen und Osterberichte*, 136f.

[69]Delling, "The Resurrection of Jesus and Its Significance for Faith in Jesus Christ," 80; also Hahn, *Christologische Hoheitstitel*, 204ff.

[70]Campenhausen, *Der Ablauf der Osterereignisse und das leere Grab*, 11.

[71]Gen. 22:3; Gen. 22:1-19; Gen. 42:18ff.; Ex. 19:11-16; 2 Sam. 1:1-16; 1 Kgs. 12:12; Est. 5:1-8, 17; 1 Macc. 11:18; Hos. 6:1, etc.

[72]Seidensticker, "Das antiochenische Glaubensbekenntnis I Cor 15,3-7 im Lichte seiner Traditionsgeschichte," 302.

probably to be found in Jesus Himself. Jesus in His lifetime probably predicted that His death, though inevitable, would mean a national revival in the near future, i.e., He probably used the phrase "on the third day" or "after three days" in the sense of "a little while" similar to Hos. 6:2, etc.[73] But B. Lindars is more correct in concluding that it was the actual Resurrection "on the third day" (i.e., its discovery) which caused the literal interpretation of the phrase. The apostles realized that the mysterious "little while" was literally fulfilled. "A prophecy of speedy renewal on the lips of Jesus spoken in terms of" the Old Testament "was adopted by the Church as a triumphant example of literal fulfillment, and then used conveniently as a theologoumenon of the Resurrection."[74]

3) " ... that he appeared to Peter, etc." Paul here lists the witnesses to whom Jesus appeared. He clearly understands these appearances to witnesses as a confirmation of the fact that Jesus has been raised.[75]

a) "He appeared." Hahn has rightly criticized Grass[76] for too hastily concluding that from the repeated use of the word "He appeared" (*ōphthē*) nothing could be concluded concerning the nature of the appearances.[77] This word belonged to the biblical terminology for the revelatory event, and guarantees the objectivity of the event. In the use of this word, there is question in particular of a coming forth from invisibility, especially from the world of God, of a becoming visible that

[73]Cf. the predictions of the Passion and Lk. 13:32; see Barnabus Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), 60-63.

[74]Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic*, 66; cf. 71-72.

[75]Delling, "The Resurrection of Jesus and Its Significance for Faith in Jesus Christ," 86-87.

[76]Grass, *Ostergeschehen und Osterberichte*, 181ff.

[77]Hahn, *Christologische Hoheitstitel*, 207 and n. 3.

does not depend upon the one seeing.[78] Furthermore, it is also clear in the context of the Resurrection appearances that *ōphthē* does not merely mean to reveal oneself as present without sensible perception playing a role,[79] but "to be manifested as visibly present."[80] This is confirmed by Paul's exclamation "I have seen the Lord" (1 Cor. 9:1). On the other hand, it must be conceded that the "seeing" because of its object should only be called a "seeing" in an analogous sense.[81] Because of its character as mystery, the world of God breaking into visibility must have effected a "seeing" of an extraordinary kind and was not a reality visible to everybody. This is especially clear in view of the Damascus event (cf. Acts 9).[82] But the word *ōphthē* was very well suited to express that experience of reality which the disciples had in their meeting with the risen Christ. It makes clear that they were conscious of standing in the face of reality. It emphasizes the action of the one revealing himself, the real becoming visible, and also the possibility of perceiving him.[83]

b) The witnesses (verses 5-8). On the basis of this early (Jerusalem) tradition and the proximity of Paul to the witnesses and to the events, the assumption that appearances of the risen one were really experienced by a number of the members of the primitive Christian community possesses good historical foundation. Verse 8 is certainly an addition of Paul and v. 6b is generally held to be a Pauline addition with an apologetic purpose to emphasize the reality of the appearances

[78]Hahn, *Christologische Hoheitstitel*, 207 and n. 3.

[79]See W. Michaelis, "oraō," *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* V, ed. Gerhard Friedrich (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1957), 355f., 359.

[80]Delling, "The Resurrection of Jesus and Its Significance for Faith in Jesus Christ," 84.

[81]Adolf Kolping, "Auferstehung," in *Handbuch theologischer Grundbegriffe* I, ed. Heinrich Fries (Munich: Kösel, 1962), 142.

[82]Pannenberg, *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 90.

[83]Hahn, *Christologische Hoheitstitel*, 207.

of Jesus. For the rest we can say with Hahn: "However it may be with the appearances of vv. 6a and 7, whether they belonged to the formula from the beginning, or were subsequently added, whether it is a question of a truly chronological series, or of 'rivaling' enumerations of the first Resurrection-witnesses, whether the combination with the old formula was already completed before Paul or first by him, it can be said with certitude that v. 5 still belongs to the old formula."[84]

However, even though it is possible that vv. 6 and 7 were later additions to the early confessional formula, there is no reason for holding this data to be less dependable or even legendary. Paul knew not only Peter but also James personally, and at the beginning of his Christian activity had visited Jerusalem (Gal. 1:18). Paul therefore was informed at first hand about that which he now passed on.[85]

This enumeration of the various witnesses of the Resurrection has as its purpose to show that the Resurrection was a real event and was assured by credible witnesses. It was on the basis of the testimony of immediate eyewitnesses that the early Church believed in the real Resurrection. Note that Paul says that we attain salvation only by persevering in this formula (*logos*).

The Empty Tomb

As we have seen, the earliest record does not speak specifically of the empty tomb. We have indicated that Paul probably assumed a real transformation of the dead body of Jesus and thus the fact of the tomb becoming empty. It is possible that he knew of the stories of the empty tomb, but this is not ascertainable. But Pannenberg is correct in affirming that the fact that Paul nowhere mentions the empty

[84]Hahn, *Christologische Hoheitstitel*, 197-198. Seidensticker (Seidensticker, "Das antiochenische Glaubensbekenntnis I Cor 15,3-7 im Lichte seiner Traditionsgeschichte," 311-312) has made an effort to prove that the original confessional formula closed with v. 6a and that v. 5 was added later. But the argumentation is not convincing.

[85]Campenhausen, *Der Ablauf der Ostereignisse und das leere Grab*, 10.

tomb need not shake the dependability of the reports in the Gospels.[86] The primary basis for the Resurrection faith was the testimony of the official eyewitnesses of the risen Jesus. This was the theme exploited in the proclamation to nonbelievers. Women had no official status as witnesses in Jewish law.

J. A. T. Robinson would go further and hold that though the empty tomb may not receive specific mention in the most primitive evidence, it is almost certainly implicit in the pre-Gospel tradition insofar as this can be reconstructed from the Pauline letters and the speeches in Acts.[87] 1 Cor. 15:4 (buried-raised), Acts 13:29-30 (laid in the tomb-God raised Him), Acts 2:31 (He did not see corruption[88]) all imply the belief in a bodily resurrection from the tomb.

However, for what occurred in Jerusalem, we must depend almost exclusively on the Gospel tradition. In its present form, this is later than Paul and possesses far less favorable indices of historical trustworthiness than the text of Paul. "Legendary, apologetic, in part also cultic-liturgical and polemical-ecclesiastical political tendencies make themselves especially noticeable here."[89] They are narrations written down in close connection with preaching. They are stamped by faith, and "corresponding to the understanding of history at that time are not free also from legendary touches and midrashic embellishments."[90] Among all the narratives we possess, no two agree with one another. However, as Campenhausen points out, the unfavorable impression is considerably decreased if we once decide to set aside the provably later accounts and follow the Marcan tradition, which is used and developed

[86]Pannenberg, *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 97.

[87]Robinson, *The Body*, 45-46.

[88]Lindars affirms: "There can be no doubt that the argument is primitive" (Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic*, 42).

[89]Campenhausen, *Der Ablauf der Osterereignisse und das leere Grab*, 21.

[90]Anton Vögtle, in Wilfried Joest, et al., *Was heisst Auslegung der Heiligen Schrift* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1966), 63 (author's own translation).

in all the later Gospels. It is true that Mark is not simply the report of an eyewitness. Here too the stories betray the contradictions of different traditions, additions, and legendary traits. But as a whole the account is in no way fantastic. Manifestly ancient reports often lie at its basis, and the presentation is in large part so sober and objective that it is not permitted to reject a priori what it contains as incredible. All the data must be tested step by step.[91]

The Burial: Mk. 15:42-47

The narrative of the burial is credible and trustworthy. "The tradition that he was given burial in a tomb with its circumstantial explanation in all the gospel accounts (Mk. 15:42-47; Mt. 27:57-61; Lk. 23:50-56; Jn. 19:38-42) must be accepted as one of the most firmly grounded facts of Jesus' life."[92] Bultmann concedes that "abstraction made from vv. 44-45, 47, the historical notice does not give the impression of legend. It would be difficult to show that it was introduced afterwards in view of the story of Easter."[93] In particular, there is no reason to doubt the notice concerning the role of Joseph of Arimathea. Benoit insists that he is certainly historical.

> They knew his function, his village.... If the Christians had afterwards imagined the burial of Jesus by the hands of friends, they would have

[91]Campenhausen, *Der Ablauf der Osterereignisse und das leere Grab*, 21.

[92]Robinson, *The Body*, 45. Others, while agreeing that the arguments for the reliability of the account of the burial possess real force, feel that "scholarly opinion has been a little inclined to underestimate some of the difficulties" (Dennis E. Nineham, *Saint Mark* [Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963], 433. Cf. Grass, *Ostergeschehen und Osterberichte*, 173-182, 184). But the judgment of Campenhausen appears very sound: "Grass ... would like to at least hold open the possibility that all accounts concerning the burial are later legends—which would naturally facilitate the explanation of the 'empty tomb' as legend. But he cannot produce convincing reasons for this" (Campenhausen, *Der Ablauf der Osterereignisse und das leere Grab*, 23, n. 81).

[93]Rudolf Bultmann, *Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, 3rd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1957), 296 (author's own translation).

attributed it to Peter or to James or to some other personage of the Gospels. Where except in real life did they find this Joseph of Arimathea who is named nowhere else? This personage is a precious historical datum, which imposed itself on all the Evangelists and which by itself guarantees the burial of Jesus.[94]

The Discovery of the Tomb: Mk. 16:1-8

This narrative possesses a very different character from the preceding one. We find here a "young man," i.e., an angel, who interprets the meaning of the empty tomb and gives a command to the women to tell Peter and the disciples about it. A further peculiarity is the fact that the women do not carry out the command for which they have been given a special revelation. "They said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid" (Mk. 16:8). From a historiographical point of view this is incredible.

However, the "strange" character of this pericope disappears when we realize that it has been literarily developed from a historical kernel for didactic purposes (Gutwenger, Vögtle, Benoit, Wilckens, Campenhausen, etc.). The oldest preliterary form spoke of women coming to the tomb, of their astonishment at finding it empty, and of their flight. This form knew nothing of the silence of the women, nor of their encounter with the angel. Gutwenger would find the original kernel reflected in vv. 2, 4, 5a, and 8a.[95] He holds that v. 1 was a later addition when the question was raised why the women came to the tomb so early. Verses 5b-7, the scene with the angel, were added once the kerygmatically orientated tradition felt the need of uniting to the story of the ambivalent empty tomb the message of the Resurrection as

[94]Pierre Benoit, *Passion et résurrection du Seigneur* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1966), 260-261 (all translations from this source are the author's own). Cf. Campenhausen, *Der Ablauf der Osterereignisse und das leere Grab*, 22-23, 42; Nineham, *Saint Mark*, 434.

[95]Engelbert Gutwenger, "Zur Geschichtlichkeit der Auferstehung Jesu," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 88 (1966), 273-274.

its interpretation, and a pointer to the later appearance which according to the oldest tradition occurred first in Galilee. How could this be done? In the sphere of biblical conceptions, an angel, a messenger of God, presented itself as the natural and traditional form. Notice that in the proclamation of the Resurrection placed on the mouth of the angel, the knowledge of the Resurrection is grounded in the revealing action of God. The pointer to the empty tomb ("see where they have laid Him") is added subsequently as a confirmation of the message.[96]

Verse 8b, the silence of the women, is a later intensification of the astonishment of the women. Vögtle proposes that the silence of the women was an apologetic addition intended to underline the historical fact that the Resurrection faith of the official witnesses was not a conclusion from the discovery of the empty tomb, did not rest on the

[96]Anton Vögtle, "Literarische Gattungen und Formen," *Anzeiger* 74 (1965), 3. Cf. Joseph Schmitt, "Auferstehung Jesu II," in Karl Rahner, *Sacramentum mundi* I (Freiburg: Herder, 1967), 410. Maurice Goguel (*La foi a la résurrection de Jésus dans le christianisme primitif* [Paris: Leroux, 1933], 175) also proposed that the "angelophany" (vv. 5-7) was introduced subsequently and that the original narrative (vv. 1-4, 8) only told of the discovery of the empty grave and the flight of the women. Ernst Lohmeyer (*Das Evangelium des Markus*, 17th ed. [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967], 357) and Vincent Taylor (*The Gospel according to Mark* [London: Macmillan, 1959], 609) find this conjecture questionable, because the mere discovery of the empty tomb would not explain the quaking (Taylor) and the terror of the women (Lohmeyer) in v. 8. Grass (Grass, *Ostergeschehen und Osterberichte*, 182-183) also argues that the terror of the women is clearly connected with the appearance of the angel as a characteristic trait common to many biblical narratives of legendary character which speak of the appearance of the divine. However, this would only mean that the reference to terror (*tromos*) in v. 8 was added as a connecting link with the inserted "angelophany" (vv. 5-7), while the *ekstasis* reflects the original astonishment and confusion of the women at their discovery. Note that the expression *tromos kai ekstasis* is an unusual combination, since *tromos* is "mostly combined with *phobos*" (William Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexikon of the New Testament* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957], 834). *Ekstasis* means "properly distraction or disturbance of mind caused by a shock" (Alexander Souter, *A Pocket Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949], 77).

word of women, whose word as witnesses was considered worthless in Jewish law, but was grounded exclusively in the appearances of the risen Lord.[97]

Under the presupposition that the verses concerning the angel (5b-7) were understood by the tradition itself as a biblical element of style, it becomes still more understandable that the oldest Easter preaching available to us does not explicitly appeal to the discovery of the empty tomb. Above all, it would explain why Matthew and Luke, independently of one another, do not scruple to transform the circumstances and message of the scene involving the angel. They realized that its purpose was kerygmatic and not historical.

Wilckens affirms that the body of this narrative "is not merely pre-Marcan, but goes back to a very early stage in the history of the tradition."[98]

> There was a story by the women about their discovery of the empty tomb, which was known at the time the primitive community was constituted in Jerusalem. In the course of the elaboration of the tradition of the passion it became the narrative framework of the preaching of the resurrection, in that the "meaning" of the discovery by the women of the empty tomb—as the earthly evidence that Jesus' resurrection had taken place—was stylized in the form of the proclamation by the angel.[99]

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[97]Vögtle, "Literarische Gattungen und Formen," 3. Cf. also Anton Vögtle, "Growth and Nature of the Gospels," in *The Bible in a New Age*, ed. Ludwig Klein (London: Sheed & Ward, 1965), 92ff.

[98]Wilckens, "The Tradition-History of the Resurrection of Jesus," 71.

[99]Wilckens, "The Tradition-History of the Resurrection of Jesus," 73; cf. Delling, "The Resurrection of Jesus and Its Significance for Faith in Jesus Christ," 92; Pannenberg, *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 99-100; Hans Waldenfels, "Ostern und wir Christen heute," *Geist und Leben* 40 (1967), 31-33. Although Seidensticker retains a numinous experience of the women at the tomb (p. 87), he concedes that, critically considered, it remains uncertain what the women experienced. "Only that the grave was empty is the univocal statement of all the narratives

Benoit concludes: "The tradition of the finding of the empty tomb is of great value; it is not a suspect and late invention; it is a primitive datum which can really, with the subsequent apparitions, justify and ground the Christian faith."[100]

This conclusion, obtained from a literary analysis of the tradition, is strengthened by general historical considerations.[101] First of all, the disciples of Jesus would not have been able to preach His resurrection if they could be refuted by the presence of the tomb of Jesus in which His body was present. This is especially true in view of the popular Pharisaic notion of resurrection. The Resurrection kerygma "could not have continued in Jerusalem one day, one hour, if the emptiness of the grave was not firmly established as a fact for all involved."[102]

A second consideration strengthens the dependability of the narrative of the discovery of the empty tomb. It is a fact that the early Jewish polemic against the Christian message of the Resurrection, which has left traces in the Gospels themselves, gave various explanations for the emptiness of the tomb.[103] They first said the disciples stole the body (Matthew). They later said the gardener had taken it (John). But they never objected that the grave of Jesus was intact. Jewish polemic would have had every interest in emphasizing such an objection if it could have

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concerning Easter morning" (Philipp Seidensticker, *Die Auferstehung Jesu in der Botschaft der Evangelisten* [Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1968], 81).

[100]Benoit, *Passion et résurrection du Seigneur*, 295.

[101]For what follows, cf. Pannenberg, *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 97-99.

[102]Paul Althaus, *Die Wahrheit des kirchlichen Osterglaubens* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1940), 22ff. (author's own translation). Brändle and others object that the earliest preaching could not have avoided speaking explicitly of the empty tomb if it were a known fact. It would have to be proven by the early preachers. This objection is unjustified for the simple reason that everyone in Jerusalem knew of the empty tomb. It could be presupposed. Cf. Werner Bulst, "Auferstehung Jesu III," in Rahner, *Sacramentum mundi* I, 414-415.

[103]Campenhausen, *Der Ablauf der Osterereignisse und das leere Grab*, 31ff.

been maintained. On the contrary, they shared with their Christian opponents the conviction that the grave of Jesus was empty and never hinted at the contrary. They contented themselves with explaining the emptiness of the tomb in a way other than resurrection.

A third consideration is also important. The story in its essentials is difficult to explain as a late fabrication by Christians to answer the demands of apologetic or to express their understanding of the Resurrection. If these were the circumstances in which it originated, why did it come to be framed almost exclusively in terms of women witnesses, who were invalid witnesses according to the Jewish principles of evidence? "The later and the more fictitious the story, the harder it is to explain why the apostles are not brought to the forefront" as the discoverers of the empty tomb.[104]

Pannenberg insists that the weight of the general historical considerations would still stand even if the narratives of the finding of the empty tomb should be proven to be late legends first conceived in the Hellenistic communities. He rightly maintains that only if one onesidedly limits oneself to the analysis of the text tradition for the grounding of the historical judgment, as Grass has done, can one come to a negative result in the question of the empty tomb of Jesus.[105]

Furthermore, Grass believes that the state of the tradition by itself provides no argument which would be unconditionally convincing for the historicity of the empty tomb.[106] Still, in debate with Campenhausen even Grass concedes "that the gap in the historical argumentation for the empty tomb is very small," even though he does not pose the question in the light of the situation of the Easter kerygma in Jerusalem, but limits himself to the analysis of the tradition of the text. Pannenberg maintains that if one proceeds from the historical consideration

[104]Moule, "St. Paul and Dualism: The Pauline Conception of Resurrection," 9.

[105]Pannenberg, *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 99.

[106]Grass, *Ostergeschehen und Osterberichte*, 183.

of the situation of the Resurrection kerygma in the first Jerusalem community, then the state of the tradition confirms what is already to be presupposed from elsewhere as historically more probable: in Jerusalem it was known that the grave was empty. "Only if the state of the text *forced* one to an opposite judgment could the weight of the historical argument from the relation between the Resurrection preaching in Jerusalem and the therein presupposed emptiness of the grave of Jesus be met."[107] As a matter of fact, however, the traditions, even though exhibiting strongly legendary additions, point in the direction which a priori was to be expected historically as the presupposition for the Resurrection kerygma of the Jerusalem community. "In Jewish as well as Christian circles, the fact of the empty grave was well known."[108]

We have every reason, therefore, to conclude with Campenhausen that when we have investigated what can be investigated, we cannot avoid allowing to stand the report of the empty tomb itself and of its early discovery. Much speaks for it and nothing decisive and definite against it. In the language of the historian, it is therefore probably historical. "The discovery of the empty tomb is one of the two data which emerge from the traditional material as essential and dependable."[109]

It is hardly accurate to say concerning the discussion of the empty tomb that "both sides have good arguments."[110] At least they are not equally good. Ebert admits that the main argument against the historicity of the empty-tomb narratives is that the grave narratives are secondary and of late origin. Unquestionably, the stories of the empty tomb as we have them are more recent in the literary sense. But this does not mean that the tradition of the empty tomb is late and secondary. "It is one thing to point out the lateness of the story

[107]Pannenberg, *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 89.

[108]Pannenberg, *Grundzüge der Christologie*, 101.

[109]Campenhausen, *Der Ablauf der Osterereignisse und das leere Grab*, 42.

[110]Hans Ebert, "Die Krise des Osterglaubens," 324.

of the women at the tomb and the embellishments it has undergone. It is something else to jump to the conclusion that the tomb was not empty and that Jesus' body remained in it."[111] The literary lateness of the story of the women at the tomb is explained by the fact that in the early proclamation only the visions of the official witnesses, the decisive ground of the Easter faith, would have been exploited. Women had no official status as witnesses in Jewish law. "Only when there was an attempt at a continuous narrative such as we now find in the Gospels would it have been necessary to supply the connective between the burial story and that of the first appearance."[112]

THEOLOGICAL OBJECTION AND CONCLUSION

Some theologians make use of a theological argument to bolster their scepticism concerning the empty tomb, the historical arguments against which they admit to be inconclusive.[113] As theologians, they repel any inference that the character of Christ's resurrection is different from that which belongs to those who are in Christ (whose bodies undoubtedly decay and are destroyed).[114]

To this must be opposed the theological argument that the transformation of the material body of Christ is theologically very meaningful as the revelation, guarantee, and first fruits of the future transformation not only of persons but of the entire cosmos.

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[111]Raymond E. Brown, "The Resurrection and Biblical Criticism," *Commonweal* 87 (1967), 235; cf. Wilckens, "The Tradition-History of the Resurrection of Jesus," 235.

[112]Brown, "The Resurrection and Biblical Criticism," 235.

[113]Geoffrey Lampe and Donald MacKinnon, *The Resurrection: A Dialogue* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), 58; Emil Brunner, *Dogmatics* II (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1952), 371.

[114]Lampe, *The Resurrection: A Dialogue*, 58-60; Brunner, *Dogmatics* II, 371-372.

Furthermore, it can be shown that the resurrection of Christ's material body does not make His resurrection totally different from that which belongs to those who are in Christ. Moule would suggest that the total matter of this time-space existence is destined by the Creator not to be "scrapped" but to be used up into some other existence.

> If so, is it inconceivable that in just the area of the body of Jesus, which alone had been surrendered to death in total absolute obedience to the will of God, this transformation and using up was anticipated; while with the rest of mankind their "material" returns to the collective reservoir of the totality of matter one way or another, by decomposition slow or sudden, until this totality of things is ultimately used as the material of a new existence, in which they, by the grace of God, will share? If this were true, then the difference between Christ and believers ... would be only that Jesus *anticipates* their ultimate destiny.[115]

Finally, it is not true to say that the character of Christ's resurrection must be the same as our resurrection. The resurrection of Christ is a unique event. His is pre-eminent rather than typical. "It is by definition the resurrection of the Messiah."[116] Its character will depend on the significance He possesses in the history of salvation.

Many of the objections against the idea of the corpse of Christ being transformed and disappearing from the tomb stem from the modern understanding of self and the world. We are more aware today of the "preunderstanding" that conditions all men's statements concerning self and the world. We are therefore aware also that a time-conditioned "preunderstanding" conditioned the early Church's formulation of its faith, and therefore of its Easter faith. For the primitive community this "preunderstanding" was, at least in part, that of Jewish apocalyptic, one of whose elements was the conception of the material body rising from the grave at the last day.[117] Today this "preunderstanding" is not ours, and Ebert affirms: "For us today the empty tomb is not a help

[115]Moule, "St. Paul and Dualism: The Pauline Conception of Resurrection," 10.

[116]Robinson, *The Body*, 43-44.

[117]Ebert, "Die Krise des Osterglaubens," 315-318.

for our faith as it was for the primitive community, but for many it is rather a hindrance."[118] Just as the early Church interpreted its Easter faith in time-conditioned thought forms and conceptions, so today we must "deapocalypticize" their expression of the Easter faith and reinterpret it in a manner compatible with the modern understanding of man and existence.

Ebert is aware that this does not mean that the apocalyptic thought schemes can be simply stripped from the content of the Easter faith in a mechanical manner and replaced by others, as though we could peel away the linguistic formulation, grasp the thought content in its pure form, and then reclothe it again with a new linguistic formulation. But he urges that precisely in order to remain true to the Resurrection faith, we must attempt to translate it into forms in keeping with our understanding of the world and of existence.[119]

In the climate produced by Vatican II, no one will disagree in principle with the necessity of such retranslation of the meaning of our faith for today. But we are also aware that this process of translation is a very delicate operation. Extreme care must be taken that translation does not result in dissipation, and here the question is: Is the element of the transformation of the corpse of Christ, the empty tomb, a time-conditioned expression of the Easter faith and an element of no significance? What we have seen thus far does not lead us to assume so. It may not be easy for the nonbeliever and "modern man" to grasp. But neither is the Incarnation of the Son of God. In an attempt to make this latter point of faith comprehensible to modern man, Bultmann has effectively eliminated it. Elimination of the empty tomb would not necessarily eliminate the Resurrection as a "real event," the point upon which the German bishops insisted. But it would certainly change the meaning of that event as the Church has until now understood it, and there does not appear to be sufficient reason for doing this. We do not

[118]Ebert, "Die Krise des Osterglaubens," 325.

[119]Ebert, "Die Krise des Osterglaubens," 326-327.

"hang on to" the empty tomb because we mistakenly believe that the empty tomb can *prove* the Easter faith historically, as Brändle charges.[120] But we insist on the empty tomb because there is reason for thinking that the sources of our faith insist on it, not as a time-conditioned interpretation of the Resurrection, but as the historical context of the divine event of the Resurrection itself. "The resurrection accounts indicate that the divine occurrence is revealed in empirical events.... The occurrence of Jesus' resurrection, which is not itself accessible to historical control ... is linked with facts at least theoretically provable within the historical framework—the resurrection appearances and the empty tomb."[121]

Furthermore, both these facts are important for the correct interpretation of the Resurrection and for its meaning for modern man. In the last four pages of his article, Ebert sketches an outline of a new interpretation of the Easter faith for our time. The remarkable thing about the sketch is that it is equally valid if the event of the Resurrection included a transformation of Jesus' corpse from the tomb. In fact, the sketch is heavily dependent upon Karl Rahner's theology of the Resurrection, which was certainly elaborated under the presupposition of the empty tomb.

It is true that our faith is not directed primarily toward individual historical facts but to the mystery of God in Christ, and our Easter faith is not directed primarily to the empty tomb but to the mystery of the definitive and total self-communication of God to the total reality of Jesus of Nazareth as the revelation and initiation of the definitive self-communication of God to the world as its salvation.[122] But precisely therein lies the deepest reason for believing that the resurrection of

[120]Brändle, "Did Jesus' Tomb Have to Be Empty?", 18.

[121]Oscar Cullmann, *Salvation in History* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 143.

[122]Karl Rahner, "Auferstehung Christi, IV," in Karl Rahner, et al., *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* I (Freiburg: Herder, 1957), 1038 (all translations from this source are the author's own).

Jesus was a bodily resurrection from the tomb. Because Jesus' bodily humanity was a part of the one world with one dynamic tendency, the resurrection of *this* bodily humanity, and therefore of *this* body, "is objectively the beginning of the transfiguration of the world as an ontologically unified event, because in this event the fate of the world has been fundamentally decided and already begun."[123] Rahner insists that there is a real ontological unity of the material universe, a basic oneness of the world by which all things in the world are related and communicate anteriorly to any mutual influence upon each other.[124] By the Incarnation the Logos has united to Himself once and for all a portion of this world, and indeed, a portion of its material reality. In view of the unity of the material universe, it is important that the body of Jesus, a portion of the material reality of this one world, should have been glorified. It is in this way that the world as a whole, the totality of this material cosmos, is actually in process of reaching in and through the risen Jesus that final state in which God will be all in all.[125]

According to Teilhard de Chardin, modern man's most pressing psychological need is an assurance that some successful outcome exists for the world and for that progress on earth for which he knows himself to be responsible. The risen body of Christ, that part of the material universe in which the successful outcome already exists, is this assurance and is at the same time the physical center for mankind and the whole material world,[126] drawing the remainder of its unity toward the totally successful outcome. The whole concept of the cosmos being restored in and by Jesus Christ, the theme of Col. 1:15-20, is involved in the Resurrection as a bodily resurrection from the tomb.

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[123]Rahner, "Auferstehung Christi, IV," 1040.

[124]Karl Rahner, *On the Theology of Death* (New York: Herder, 1961), 27.

[125]Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations* I (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1960), 165.

[126]Cf. Christopher Mooney, "The Body of Christ in the Writings of Teilhard de Chardin," *Theological Studies* 25 (1964), 576-578.

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THE RESURRECTION AND THE EMPTY TOMB

Joseph J. Smith, S.J.

Since the time of the Enlightenment (end of the seventeenth to the eighteenth century), the question whether the tomb of Jesus was empty has been hotly debated, and a theologian's answer to this question was most often evaluated as an indication of his affirmation or denial of the real resurrection of Jesus. In recent decades, a great change has taken place. Some Catholic theologians, who firmly believe the real resurrection of Jesus, affirm that Jesus' tomb was probably not empty or at least not known to be empty.[1] They arrive at this conclusion on the basis of their analysis and interpretation of the New Testament witness. But their conclusion is conditioned by the modern horizon of understanding according to which "the

[1]For example, Hans Küng, *On Being a Christian* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976), 366: "Faith in the risen Christ is independent of the empty tomb. The empty tomb is not a condition, but at best an illustration, of the Easter event.... Today ... historical criticism has made the empty tomb a dubious factor and the conclusions of natural science have rendered it suspect. To maintain the identity (of the risen person with the crucified Jesus of Nazareth) God does not need the relics of Jesus' earthly existence. We are not tied to physiological ideas of the resurrection. There can be identity of the person even without continuity between the earthly and the 'heavenly', 'spiritual' body."

empty tomb is not an unconditional presupposition for the truth of the Easter message, since the existence of the resurrection body does not depend on its material identity with the bio-chemical substratum of the earthly body."[2]

The chemical components of the human body change continually within a person's lifetime. "For example, of the sixty million million cells which compose the human organism, five hundred million are renewed every day."[3] Consequently, as far as its chemical components are concerned, the earthly body's identity is only apparent because continual change takes place within a more or less fixed and perceptible structure. A greater identity than that which the earthly body has with itself will not be necessary for the relation between the resurrection body and the earthly body whose remains are placed in the tomb. In other words, "only a similarity in numerical difference need be postulated,"[4] not numerical identity. "The truth of the resurrection of Jesus is manifestly not indissolubly connected with an empty tomb of Jesus or the dependability of the tradition of the empty tomb."[5]

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[2]Jacob Kremer, *Die Osterevangelien - Geschichten um Geschichte*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1981), 49 (hereafter cited as *Osterevangelien*), all translations from this source are the author's own.

[3]Xavier Leon-Dufour, *Resurrection and the Message of Easter* (London: G. Chapman, 1974), 239 (hereafter cited as *Resurrection*).

[4]Engelbert Gutwenger, "Auferstehung und Auferstehungsleib Jesu," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 91 (1969), 46-47 (author's own translation). "In the Catholic tradition no theological opinion has imposed itself in the question concerning the bond which unites the resurrection body to its earthly body. Alongside of those who have maintained the necessity of a material link with the corpse (Scheeben, Lepicier, d'Ales, Piolanti, de Broglie), others following Durand of Saint Pourcain, believe that in order to ensure the continuity of the resurrected person with him who was alive, the identity of the substantial form, i.e. the soul is sufficient" (cf. Luigi Ciappi, "La risurrezione dei morti secondo la dottrina cattolica," *Gregorianum* 39 [1958], 216-220). Leon-Dufour, *Resurrection*, 320, n. 38.

[5]Jacob Kremer, "Zur Diskussion über 'das leere Grab'," in *Resurrexit*, ed. Édouard Dhanis (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1974), 140 (hereafter cited as "Zur Diskussion"), all translations from this source are the author's own.

And so, some Catholic scholars propose that in his resurrection Jesus became a new creation clothed in a new heaven-made body which has no continuity with the dead body placed in the tomb after the crucifixion. "God raises the person in a new, different, unimaginable 'spiritual corporality'."[6]

Other Catholic theologians concede that in the abstract an empty tomb is not the unconditional presupposition for the existence of a risen body. But on the basis of their analysis and interpretation of the New Testament witness, they maintain that in the case of Jesus of Nazareth, shortly after his death and burial the tomb was found to be empty. However, they admit that this can only be affirmed with high probability and cannot count as a compelling proof of the resurrection. They admit that by itself an empty tomb proves nothing, since it is open to a variety of possible explanations (theft of the body, transfer to another grave, visit to the wrong tomb, etc.). In the context of the appearances of the risen Jesus, however, the empty tomb is a sign given by God which points to the resurrection. In fact, in the gospel narratives, contrary to a widespread assumption, "the reference to the opened, empty tomb never has the function of a compelling proof but of a sign calling for faith or confirming it."[7]

The fundamental difference between these two groups of theologians lies in the different historical conclusions drawn from their respective analyses and interpretations of the narratives concerning the opened and empty tomb. There is widespread agreement that, at least for the first witnesses to the resurrection, faith in Jesus as the risen one implied the idea that Jesus' corpse was not to be found in the tomb. "Considering the Jewish anthropological conceptions of that time, the message of the resurrection implied ... *ipso facto* the emptiness of the tomb of Jesus."[8] However, a distinction must be made between 1) the

[6]Küng, *On Being a Christian*, 366.

[7]Kremer, *Osterevangelien*, 18.

[8]Kurt Schubert, "'Auferstehung Jesu' im Lichte der Religionsgeschichte des Judentums," in Dhanis, *Resurrexit*, 218; cf. Lorenz Oberlinner, "Die Verkündigung

belief that the tomb was empty based on Jewish anthropology and the idea of resurrection in the Palestinian milieu and 2) the actual knowledge that the tomb was empty based on the discovery and verification of its emptiness. The first does not imply the second. It is the second alternative which is the object of disagreement. What are the arguments pro and con? The following survey of the arguments will provide an introduction to the problematic of an historical reconstruction of the historical antecedents of the Easter message.

THE ABSENCE OF THE "EMPTY TOMB" IN THE OLDEST TRADITION

The oldest traditions concerning the resurrection (e.g., 1 Cor. 15:3b-5) do not mention the opened and empty tomb. An analysis of the semantic structure of the traditional, pre-Pauline formula that Paul makes use of in 1 Cor. 15:3b-5 ("Christ ... died ... was buried ... was raised ... appeared") shows that the church of the beginning "understood the resurrection of Jesus from the dead as the resurrection of the crucified and buried body of Jesus."[9] Therefore, the Easter faith presupposed the disappearance of Jesus' dead body from the tomb. "But it cannot be said that the formula attests and intends to attest the empty tomb as empirical fact.... The same is true also for Paul himself."[10]

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der Auferweckung Jesu im geöffneten und leeren Grab," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 73 (1982), 165 (hereafter cited as "Die Verkündigung"), all translations from this source are the author's own.

[9]Franz Mussner, "Zur stylistischen und semantischen Struktur der Formel von 1 Kor 15:3-5," in *Die Kirche des Anfangs*, eds. Rudolf Schnackenburg, Joseph Ernst, and Joachim Wanke (Freiburg: Herder, 1978), 415; cf. 412-415 (hereafter cited as "Struktur"), author's own translation.

[10]Anton Vögtle and Rudolf Pesch, *Wie kam es zum Osterglauben?* (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1975), 87 (hereafter cited as *Osterglauben*), all translations from this source are the author's own. J. Kremer has corrected his earlier statement (*Das älteste Zeugnis von der Auferstehung Jesu* [Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk,

A. Vögtle goes further and affirms that there are good reasons for saying that "Paul in any case knew nothing of the discovery of the empty tomb."[11] J. Kremer comes to a more nuanced conclusion. "It can neither be proven that Paul did not know the traditions about the empty tomb, nor that he knew them. However more speaks for the latter."[12] W. L. Craig attempts to show why. He points out that we know from Paul's letters that Paul was in Jerusalem three years after his conversion, and that he stayed with Peter two weeks and also spoke with James (Gal. 1:18-19). Fourteen years later, Paul was again in Jerusalem and ministered with Barnabas in Antioch (Gal. 2:1.11). We know that he also knew the context of the traditions he delivered (1 Cor. 11:23-26). Craig's conclusion is that if Mark's narrative of the empty tomb contains an old tradition coming out of the Jerusalem community, "it is unthinkable that Paul would not have known it."[13] The crucial question, of course, is whether Mark's narrative of the empty tomb is based on an old tradition of the discovery of the empty tomb. The arguments for and against will be surveyed in the next section.

But if it is presupposed that Paul knew the tradition of the discovery of the empty tomb, the question becomes unavoidable: Why did Paul

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1967], 38-39) that though 1 Cor. 15:3-4 does not thematically treat the gospel tradition of the empty tomb, it "presupposes and thus implicitly attests" it. He now admits that "of 1 Cor. 15:3-4 it can only be said with certainty that there an empty tomb is presupposed and implicitly attested, but not the gospel tradition concerning the empty tomb" (Kremer, "Zur Diskussion," 145, n. 27).

[11]Vögtle and Pesch, *Osterglauben*, 87, with reference to Werner G. Kümmel, *Die Theologie des neuen Testaments* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969), 97f., 90.

[12]Kremer, "Zur Diskussion," 145; cf. 141-145.

[13]William L. Craig, "The Historicity of the Empty Tomb of Jesus," *New Testament Studies* 31 (1985), 50; cf. 49-50 (hereafter cited as "Historicity"). For reasons why Mark's narrative may not contain an old tradition, cf. Vögtle and Pesch, *Osterglauben*, 85-98.

make no use of this tradition in 1 Cor. 15:4-5 or 1 Cor. 15:35-57—as would be expected? J. Kremer suggests that since in 1 Cor. 15:3-11 Paul is listing witnesses confirming the credibility of the resurrection, a reference to women, whose testimony at that time possessed no probative force, would be out of place.[14] L. Oberlinner, on the other hand, thinks that the most obvious explanation is that for Paul the tradition of the opened and empty tomb "would have meant nothing more than an illustrative elaboration of the confession 'God raised Jesus (from the dead)'."[15] X. Leon-Dufour comments that we can give our imagination a free rein, but "in the eyes of Paul, this recollection (of the discovery of the empty tomb) did not appear to be either indispensable or even useful in confirming the fact of the resurrection of Jesus."[16] He did not incorporate it into his apologetic of the resurrection. In any case, J. Delorme and E. Schillebeeckx maintain that the silence of the apostolic kerygma and catechesis regarding the "empty tomb" tradition need not in any way rule out the existence of an old local Jerusalem tradition on the subject of Jesus' tomb.[17]

THE GOSPEL TRADITION OF THE "EMPTY TOMB"

Since the oldest traditions concerning the resurrection do not mention the opened and empty tomb, the primary sources for an investigation of the historical credibility of the discovery of the empty tomb are the gospel narratives of the opened and empty tomb. Most exegetes begin their analysis with the text of Mark,

[14]Kremer, "Zur Diskussion," 142.

[15]Oberlinner, "Die Verkündigung," 164.

[16]Leon-Dufour, *Resurrection*, 123.

[17]Jean Delorme, "The Resurrection and Jesus' Tomb," in Paul de Surgy, et al., *The Resurrection and Modern Biblical Thought* (New York: Corpus Books, 1970), 98-99 (hereafter cited as "Jesus' Tomb"). Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), 332.

"since this is certainly the oldest and can most easily provide access to the events themselves."[18]

The Burial: Mk. 15:42-47

R. Bultmann conceded that, abstraction made from vv. 44-45.47, this historical notice does not give the impression of a legend. It would be difficult to show that it was introduced afterwards in view of the story of Easter.[19] R. Pesch includes among the important historical information that the old narrative hands on "the report that the respected member of the council, Joseph of Arimathea ... took Jesus down from the cross and buried him after he had obtained from Pilate the release of the body of Jesus."[20] X. Leon-Dufour concludes that the "high degree of probability" that Joseph of Arimathea carried out the burial of Jesus "makes it possible to state that the disciples of Jesus could have known the place of his tomb."[21] In 1975, A. Vögtle affirmed that according to the state of the discussion at that time, much

[18]Kremer, "Zur Diskussion," 146. R. Pesch considers the recent efforts to revive the Griesbach hypothesis, which proposes the gospel of Mark as the most recent gospel, as a failure (Rudolf Pesch, "Das 'leere Grab' und der Glaube an Jesu Auferstehung," *Internationale Katholische Zeitschrift Communio* 11 [1982], 13, n. 9 [hereafter cited as "Das 'leere Grab'"], all translations from this source are the author's own). On the approach of Leon-Dufour, *Resurrection*, 103-124, cf. Beda Rigaux, *Dieu l'a resuscité* (Gembloux: Duculot, 1973), 198-200.

[19]Rudolf Bultmann, *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, 7th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), 296. Against Bultmann and Ingo Broer, *Die Urgemeinde und das Grab Jesu* (Munich, 1972). L. Schenke argues convincingly that there is no good reason for eliminating vv. 44-45 and 47 as secondary (Ludger Schenke, *Der gekreuzigte Christus* [Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1974], 80-83).

[20]Rudolf Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, II Teil (Freiburg: Herder, 1977), 517 (hereafter cited as *Markusevangelium*), all translations from this source are the author's own.

[21]Leon-Dufour, *Resurrection*, 210.

speaks for the fact that the primitive community knew the tomb of Jesus, although that cannot be affirmed with certitude.[22]

The Empty Tomb: Mk. 16:1-8

In the 1960's, A. Vögtle, P. Benoit, E. Gutwenger, and others held that the oldest stratum of the tradition of the empty tomb told of women coming to the tomb and finding it empty. At this level, the story knew nothing of their encounter with the angel and his proclamation of the resurrection.[23] In criticism of a similar proposal of E. Hirsch, E. Haenchen commented that the hypothesis of a traditional narrative without the angel and his message "yields a sequence (*Zusammenhang*) which the community would never have handed on. Precisely the message of the angel 'He is risen' is indispensable for the early Christian story about the women,"[24] for without it, as K.M. Fischer explains, "it would be a story without any preaching content whose transmission in the Christian community would hardly be understandable."[25] This criticism was taken up by L. Schenke (with reference to the proposal of A. Vögtle)[26] and by J. Delorme and X. Leon-Dufour (with reference to the proposal of P. Benoit).[27]

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[22]Vögtle and Pesch, *Osterglauben*, 85.

[23]Anton Vögtle, "Growth and Nature of the Gospels," in *The Bible in a New Age*, ed. Ludwig Klein (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1965), 95; Pierre Benoit, *Passion et Resurrection du Seigneur* (Paris: Cerf, 1966), 294-295; Engelbert Gutwenger, "Zur Geschichtlichkeit der Auferstehung Jesu," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 88 (1966), 273-274.

[24]Ernst Haenchen, *Der Weg Jesu* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1966), 545 (author's own translation).

[25]Karl M. Fischer, *Das Ostergeschehen*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), 59 (author's own translation).

[26]Ludger Schenke, *Auferstehungsverkündigung und leeres Grab* (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1968), 67-71 (hereafter cited as *Auferstehungsverkündigung*).

[27]Delorme, "Jesus' Tomb," 98: "In a community such as that of the Christian beginnings, is it conceivable that there existed traditional formulated *narratives*

In 1975, A. Vögtle acknowledged the validity of this criticism. "Today the idea has rightly gained acceptance that from the beginning the narrative lying at the basis of Mark 16 contained the proclamation of the accomplished resurrection of Jesus who lay in the tomb and was in its details consequently oriented to this message of the angel as central content of the narrative."[28] F. Neirynck observes that this is a rather general tendency among recent authors.[29]

There is, then, general agreement that Mk. 16:1-8 is not a historical report in the modern sense,[30] but a kerygmatic presentation of the church's resurrection faith in narrative form. J. Kremer observes, however, that none of the hypotheses proposed thus far are able to explain the origin and formation of the text or of its conjectured primitive form in a satisfying manner.[31] But the exegete can affirm with certitude that the narrator of the tomb story made use of certain pre-given facts of history. Among these belong, as 1 Cor. 15:3-5 bears witness, the death and burial of Jesus, as well as the primitive church's preaching of the resurrection of Jesus and its reference to the first witnesses (Peter; the twelve).[32] The question is: does the discovery of the empty tomb count as one of these facts of history? Is this the historical nucleus of the tomb tradition?

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limited to the neutral statement of a material fact? Was there ever a *narrative* concerning Jesus' tomb which was not in some way illuminated by faith in the resurrection?"; quoted by Leon-Dufour, *Resurrection*, 114-115.

[28]Vögtle and Pesch, *Osterglauben*, 94, with reference to Schenke, *Auferstehungsverkündigung*, 95.

[29]Frans Neirynck, "Marc 16:1-8: Tradition et Redaction," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 56 (1980), 76; as examples he refers to the recent commentaries of Pesch, *Markusevangelium* and Joachim Gnilka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (Zurich: Benziger, 1979).

[30]Kremer, "Zur Diskussion," 147-148; also idem, *Osterevangelien*, 42.

[31]For a survey of the hypotheses, cf. Neirynck, "Marc 16:1-8: Tradition et Redaction," 56-88.

[32]Kremer, *Osterevangelien*, 48-49.

THE MAJORITY POSITION

In 1981, J. Kremer listed a large number of exegetes who maintain that the discovery of the empty tomb is probably historical.[33] The arguments supporting the actuality of the discovery of the empty tomb are drawn from indications within the narrative itself (literary genre, the semitism τῇ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων ["on the first day of the week"], the visit to the tomb, women as the discoverers) and from the context of the events (the resurrection preaching, the Jewish polemic).

1. Literary genre. According to genre, the narrative (Mk. 16:1-8) may be classified as "primitive christian preaching in the manner of haggadah and apocalyptic literature." But in apocalyptic literature, revelations and interpretations are most often related to and connected with historical events. Therefore, from the literary genre one has to reckon with a historical kernel to the tradition.[34]

2. The semitism τῇ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων. The time notation in v. 2, τῇ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων ("on the first day of the week"), "clearly goes back to a hebrew or aramaic original and betrays the great age of the tradition, originating most probably in a Palestinian setting." J. Kremer suggests that it "should hardly have been formulated otherwise than in remembrance of a historical occurrence."[35]

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[33]Kremer, *Osterevangelien*, 50, n. 57: Blank, Blinzler, Bode, von Campenhausen, Delorme, Dhanis, Grundmann, Hengel, Lehmann, Leon-Dufour, Lichtenstein, Manek, Martini, Mussner, Nauck, Rengstorff, Rückstuhl, Schenke, Schmitt, K. Schubert, Schwank, Schweizer, Seidensticker, Strobel, Stuhlmacher, Trilling, Wilckens. We may add: Benoit, R.E. Brown, S. Brown, Clark, Craig, Dillon, Dunn, Ellis, Fuller, Gnilka, Goppelt, Gundry, Hooke, Jeremias, Klappert, Ladd, Lane, Marshall, Moule, Perry, J.A.T. Robinson, Schlier, Schnackenburg, Stein, and the Jewish scholars, Lapide and Vermes.

[34]Kremer, *Osterevangelien*, 44, 50; also idem, "Zur Diskussion," 156.

[35]Kremer, "Zur Diskussion," 152, 157; Robert Stein, "Was the tomb really empty?" *Themelios* 5 (1979), 10.

3. The visit to the tomb. As we have seen, the high degree of probability that Joseph of Arimathea carried out the burial of Jesus (Mk. 15:42-46) indicates that the tomb in which Jesus was buried could have been known to Jesus' followers, and it corresponded to the customs of the time that women visit the graves of the dead and take up again the lamentations interrupted by the sabbath.[36]

4. Women as the discoverers. In view of the fact that in Jewish society women did not count as valid witnesses,[37] the presence of women in the tradition of the opened and empty tomb is a solid argument for historical reliability. "The only good reason for attributing the report of the empty tomb to women is that this was the way it was remembered as having actually happened."[38] The community would hardly have "manufactured" a tradition which made its preaching more difficult. Lk. 24:11 appears to be an attempt to invalidate an objection drawn precisely from this point.[39]

5. The preaching of the resurrection in Jerusalem. The Jews in Jerusalem, especially the Pharisees and those influenced by Pharisaic teaching, would associate the idea of the resurrection with the physical

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[36]Kremer, "Zur Diskussion," 157, referring to Josef Blinzler, *Der Prozess Jesu*, 4th ed. (Regensburg: Pustet, 1969), 400-404; Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* I (München: Oscar Beck, 1926), 1047-1048; Kremer, *Osterevangelien*, 50. The actual motivation given—to anoint him (v.1)—is explained by some as a redactional addition of Mark (Schenke, *Auferstehungsverkündigung*, 31-37; Kremer, *Osterevangelien*, 46).

[37]Cf. Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* II (München: Oscar Beck, 1924), 441; idem, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* III (München: Oscar Beck, 1926), 217, 251, 559.

[38]James D.G. Dunn, *The Evidence for Jesus* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985), 65 (hereafter cited as *The Evidence*).

[39]Kremer, "Zur Diskussion," 157. Also cf. Stein, "Was the tomb really empty?", 10; Edward Bode, *The First Easter Morning* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970), 160-161 (hereafter cited as *Easter Morning*); Leon-Dufour, *Resurrection*, 210.

resurrection of the body.[40] Consequently, the apostolic preaching of the resurrection of Jesus "could not have continued in Jerusalem one day ... if the emptiness of the tomb was not firmly established as a fact for all involved."[41] J. Kremer observes that "it is difficult to conceive that the resurrection of Jesus was proclaimed in Jerusalem without thinking of the obviously known tomb of Jesus."[42]

6. The Jewish polemic. Jewish polemic did not deny that the tomb was empty. It rather presupposed that the tomb was empty and explained it differently than the Christians did, charging that "his disciples came by night and stole him away"—a charge that "has been spread among the Jews to this day" (Mt. 28:13.15). "The opened and empty tomb is ... a fact which, at the time when a verification was

[40]Stein, "Was the tomb really empty?", 10. J.D.G. Dunn points out that archaeology has now provided evidence that at the time of Jesus a popular understanding of resurrection in Palestine would have involved some "re-use" of the dead body. "It had become customary to return to the tomb where a loved one had laid, after a sufficient period has elapsed (a year), to gather up the bones and put them in a box (ossuary). The reasoning was straightforward: the bones should be kept together so that in the resurrection God could use them to (re)construct the body of the resurrection.... That this was indeed a popular view at the period with which we are concerned is confirmed by two passages in the New Testament which seem to reflect the same popular view—Matthew 27:52-53 and John 5:28-29. In both cases the talk is of resurrection as the dead or the bodies of the dead 'coming out of the tombs'." See Dunn, *The Evidence*, 66-67.

[41]Paul Althaus, *Die Wahrheit des kirchlichen Osterglaubens* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1940), 25 (author's own translation). Cf. Bode, *Easter Morning*, 162-163; Gerald O'Collins, *The Easter Jesus* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1973), 43 (hereafter cited as *Easter Jesus*); Leon-Dufour, *Resurrection*, 211; Kurt Schubert, "Die 'Auferstehung Jesu' im Lichte der Religionsgeschichte des Judentums," in Dhanis, *Resurrexit*, 218-219; Kremer, *Osterevangelien*, 50; Craig, "Historicity," 59.

[42]Jacob Kremer, "Die Auferstehung Jesu Christi," in *Handbuch der Fundamentaltheologie*, Bd. 2: *Traktat Offenbarung*, eds. Walter Kern, Hermann Pottmeyer, and Max Seckler (Freiburg: Herder, 1985), 188 (hereafter cited as "Auferstehung"), all translations from this source are the author's own.

possible, was contested by no one."[43] To the objection that the Jewish polemic against the tomb was a late development, E. Bode responds that this is unlikely because later there would not have been much point in arguing against this "legend" of an empty tomb, since in the intervening years "too many things could have happened to explain its being empty." Bode concludes that since the polemic did develop, it must have developed early.[44] To the objection that the controversy reflected in Mt. 28:13-15 was a late development, J. Kremer attributes no weight, since Matthew indicates that this charge of theft by the disciples had been circulating for a long time.[45]

Conclusion. On the basis of these arguments, J. Kremer concludes that the judgement of the historian H. von Campenhausen is still valid today: "In all probability they really discovered and pointed to an empty tomb.... If one tests what can be tested, we cannot avoid allowing to stand the report of the empty tomb itself and of its early discovery. Much speaks for it and nothing decisive and definite against it; it is, therefore, probably historical."[46]

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[43]Franz Mussner, *Die Auferstehung Jesu* (Munich: Kösel, 1969), 131 (author's own translation); cf. O'Collins, *Easter Jesus*, 43; Kremer, *Osterevangelien*, 50; Craig, "Historicity," 59-60; Dunn, *The Evidence*, 66.

[44]Bode, *Easter Morning*, 163.

[45]Kremer, "Zur Diskussion," 157; cf. Jacob Kremer, *Theologische Revue* 69 (1973), 460-461.

[46]Hans von Campenhausen, *Der Ablauf der Osterereignisse und das leere Grab*, 3rd ed. (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag, 1966), 42 (author's own translation); cf. Kremer, *Osterevangelien*, 50. On pp. 17-18, Kremer observes that by far most Catholic and Evangelical scholars maintain that the tomb of Jesus was found to be empty, "yet in their opinion this can only be affirmed with a degree of probability bordering on certitude...." Leon-Dufour speaks of "the very considerable probability, if not historical certainty, concerning the discovery of the absence of the body of Jesus in the tomb. A historian can go thus far" (Leon-Dufour, *Resurrection*, 211). Gerald O'Collins concludes: "There is a reasonable but not coercive case to be made for the tomb having been discovered empty." See Gerald O'Collins, *Interpreting Jesus* (London: Chapman, 1983), 127 (hereafter cited as *Interpreting*

However, there is no consensus among Catholic scholars on this point. A. Vögtle has come to the conclusion that "all things considered, under the presupposition that the tomb of Jesus was found to be empty ... greater difficulties result for the historical posing of the question than with the presupposition of the opposite."[47] K. Lehmann has agreed with this evaluation and R. Pesch affirms that the discovery of the empty tomb cannot be considered historically assured or even probable.[48] In particular, the arguments proposed in favor of the actual discovery of the empty tomb are not left unchallenged.

1. The argument from literary genre only concludes to the possibility of a historical kernel at the basis of the tomb-narrative. R. Pesch agrees that Mk. 16:1-8 is "endebted to an apocalyptic form-tradition" but finds that it was influenced by other genres as well, especially the genre of narratives which portray the search for and non-discoverability of "translated" ("*entrücketen*") persons (e.g., 2 Kgs. 2:16-18 concerning Elijah). In this genre, either there was no grave or the grave was empty. The presence of influence of this genre complicates the question concerning a historical kernel. In the light of this literary background, the narrative is to be understood as an illustration of the resurrection message in narrative form in the manner of the translation narratives (*Entrückungserzählungen*) of antiquity.[49] The decisive historical datum which led to the formation of the narrative is the primitive community's faith in the bodily resurrection of Jesus which excluded the idea that

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Jesus). Leonhard Goppelt affirms: "According to all indications, it is historically probable that, on the third day, women out of Jesus' company found his tomb, or a tomb they thought to be his, empty." Cf. Leonhard Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament* I (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 246.

[47]Vögtle and Pesch, *Osterglauben*, 98.

[48]Karl Lehmann, "Zur theologischen Rede über Tod und Auferstehung Jesu Christi," in *Christologische Schwerpunkte*, ed. Walter Kasper (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1980), 119; Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, II Teil, 537, n. 36.

[49]Paul Hoffmann, "Auferstehung," in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* IV, eds. Gerhard Krause and Gerhard Müller (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1979), 499.

his body was still in the tomb. This faith is expressed here in narrative form as a revelation of heavenly origin. The revelation message of the resurrection forms the structural core to which the whole narrative is ordered, from which it is to be interpreted and of which it is the illustration. Some elements of the narrative were "prescribed" by the well-known patterns of the genres imitated, e.g., the seeking of the corpse and its non-discoverability, the angel as messenger. Other elements were furnished by the preceding passion narrative: the names of the women (v.1; cf. Mk. 15:40), the burial of Jesus in a tomb hewn in rock (cf. Mk. 15:42-46), the death of Jesus on the cross (v.6) as the presupposition of his burial (cf. Mk. 15:21-45). Other details were freely created to carry along the movement of the narrative, e.g., the intention to anoint Jesus which motivates the going to the tomb and the entrance into it (necessary elements for the genre "search and non-discoverability").[50] There is no need for an actual discovery of the empty tomb as historical kernel. Though the possibility cannot be excluded, its probability has not been demonstrated. R. Pesch contends that Mk. 16:1-8 is a "constructed" narrative whose goal is to portray the resurrection message, not to report concerning an event.[51]

2. That the semitism τῇ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων ("on the first day of the week") points to the great age of the tradition, originating most probably in a Palestinian setting, may be conceded. But that it was formulated "in remembrance of a historical occurrence" is possible but unproven.

3. The argument from the burial customs of the time shows that a visit of women to the tomb is verisimilar. But the text of Mark says that the women came to the tomb not to take up again the lamentations interrupted by the sabbath, but in order to anoint the body (Mk. 16:1). R. Pesch observes that the intention of anointing a dead body buried a day and a half previously is most extraordinary and that it is most

[50]Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, II Teil, 519-528; 536-538; idem, "Das 'leere Grab'," 14-18; Hoffmann, "Auferstehung," 498-499.

[51]Pesch, "Das 'leere Grab'," 14.

often judged by exegetes to be historically incredible. But he denies that it can be eliminated from the original text as a secondary editorial addition (as J. Kremer and others propose),[52] for "this unusual intention of a delayed anointing of the dead proves to be a necessary narrative feature for the presentation, insofar as it requires the *entrance into the tomb* (vv. 3-5) which is indispensable for the staging of the genre 'search for and non-discoverability' (here: of the crucified and *buried* Jesus of Nazareth)."[53] The motif of the visit of women to the tomb of Jesus need not be based on historical tradition.

4. L. Oberlinner and R. Pesch deny the validity of the argument that the discovery of the opened and empty tomb by women cannot be explained as an invention of the primitive church since women were not regarded as valid witnesses, for the role of the women in the narrative does not consist in having to bear witness to anything but in providing the angel the possibility of announcing his resurrection message before a (representative) circle. Furthermore, if a narrative expression of the Easter kerygma was to be formulated in connection with the tomb of Jesus, after the flight of the disciples (Mk. 14:50) and against the background of the contemporary idea that the anointing of the dead pertained to the role of women, only the Galilean women who had been mentioned in connection with the crucifixion (Mk. 15:40) and burial (Mk. 15:47) came into question for the staging of the visit to the tomb and the proclamation of the Easter message.[54]

Moreover, it is pointed out that the narrative (Mk. 16:1-8) does *not* treat of the *discovery* of the empty tomb by the women. The pointer to the emptiness of the tomb is first found in the word of the angel in connection with the proclamation of the resurrection.[55] R. Pesch emphasizes that the "empty tomb" is not spoken of in the narrative

[52]Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, II Teil, 529.

[53]Pesch, "Das 'leere Grab'," 15.

[54]Oberlinner, "Die Verkündigung," 177; Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, II Teil, 538.

[55]Oberlinner, "Die Verkündigung," 170.

part (*"erzählten Welt"*) of the text in which the narrator himself is speaking. Rather, the "empty tomb" is contained in the discourse part (*"besprochenen Welt"*) of the text in which the angel announces by means of a formula of "non-discoverability": "He is not here" (Mk. 16:6; cf. Gen. 5:24; Ev. Pt. XXIII:56). This corresponds as a topical motif to the description of the "search" of the women who came to anoint Jesus (Mk. 16:1-4).

> The narrator avoids allowing the women to substantiate the "empty tomb"; they are only referred to it ("See the place where they laid him") by the angel who affirmed the resurrection message, after he first (with a formula) has established the "non-discoverability" of the sought "Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified": "He is not here."[56]

Pesch concedes that the hearer and reader of the narrative and the announcement of the angel logically imagine that the women had seen that Jesus was no longer there where they had placed him. "Yet the narrator himself does not explicitly formulate this 'representation'; he does not report an occurrence represented in this way."[57] Pesch concludes that precisely by the fact that the narrator has the women enter into the tomb but does not allow them to verify there the undiscoverability of the corpse of Jesus, the "empty tomb," and by the fact that he has the angel mention the "empty tomb" as confirmation of his message of the resurrection, he withdraws the "empty tomb" from historical verifiability and leaves it in the sphere of representations necessary for faith in Jesus' bodily resurrection.[58]

5. and 6. X. Leon-Dufour, who considers the discovery of the empty tomb by the women to possess "considerable probability," classifies the fifth and sixth arguments among the arguments of more doubtful value.[59] A. Vögtle concedes that they should be taken

[56]Pesch, "Das 'leere Grab'," 17.

[57]Pesch, "Das 'leere Grab'," 7.

[58]Pesch, "Das 'leere Grab'," 17.

[59]Leon-Dufour, *Resurrection*, 211.

seriously but concludes that on closer analysis they are seen to be at least inconclusive.

In relation to the sixth argument, the question arises: If the emptiness of the tomb was contested by no one, but from the beginning only explained differently by Christians and Jews, why are the conflicting explanations not mirrored in the older Easter preaching, but only in the later gospels? Presupposing that the Jewish opponents could contest neither that the disciples knew the true location of the tomb nor that the tomb was empty, "would it not be expected that the authorities would have sought to refute the followers of Jesus by the affirmation of the theft of the body by the disciples or of a transferral to another tomb, or through some other attempt to explain the emptiness of the tomb of Jesus in a natural way?" But under the presupposition that the opponents attempted to give a natural explanation, would it not have been necessary for the disciples to categorically reject this attempt and explicitly combine their affirmation of the resurrection of Jesus with a reference to the empty tomb? But in fact, the confession-tradition possesses no clear combination of the appearances with a reference to the uncontested fact of the empty tomb. Vögtle affirms that the idea of a theft of the corpse only appears for the first time in the "certainly not primitive" story of the guards at the tomb in the gospel of Matthew written toward the end of the first century.[60] He concludes that the New Testament data speak decidedly against, rather than for, the assumption that the emptiness of the tomb of Jesus was an uncontested fact.[61] L. Oberlinner agrees that reserve is recommended with regard to the argument that in Jewish polemic the "empty tomb" was not contested but only interpreted differently. It postulates an

[60]Oberlinner affirms that the apologetic of Matthew has as its necessary presupposition only the tradition of the "empty tomb" (Oberlinner, "Die Verkündigung," 170).

[61]Vögtle and Pesch, *Osterglauben*, 87-89.

early interest of the Jewish opponents in the tomb of Jesus for which we have no documentation and which, therefore, is doubtful.[62]

The fifth argument that the resurrection of Jesus could not have been proclaimed publicly in Jerusalem without being able to point to the fact of the empty tomb is rejected by R. Pesch as an unprovable postulate.[63] A. Vögtle suggests that it rests upon unclarified presuppositions and assumes answers to questions which the sources do not settle.

a) First, would the Jewish authorities have had any interest in investigating whether Jesus' corpse was still in the tomb? "Why should the Jewish teachers and leaders have taken the affirmation of the resurrection of Jesus seriously?" For the Jews, resurrection meant the end-time resurrection for judgement and final salvation. But there was no evidence that either the resurrection of all or the resurrection of the just had yet occurred. Therefore, the claim that Jesus had been raised could only be understood as the affirmation of the anticipation of the end-time resurrection for an individual. But there was no reason to take this claim seriously. The idea of such an anticipation of the end-time resurrection was completely unknown among the Jews of Palestine. Above all, for Jesus' opponents, the question concerning the validity of the claim of Jesus of Nazareth had been settled once and for all by his death on the cross. Vögtle asks whether the circumstance that the confession-tradition and the older tradition in general reflect no interest of the opponents in the fate of the corpse of Jesus can be explained by the fact that the question of his "Messiahship" was absolutely decided and settled for the Jewish leaders by his execution and that what the followers of Jesus affirmed as the action of God on

[62]Oberlinner, "Die Verkündigung," 170.

[63]Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, II Teil, 538. Adolf Kolping agrees (see Adolf Kolping, *Fundamentaltheologie*, Bd. III/1 (Münster: Verlag Regensberg, 1981), 521.

Jesus was in their eyes so absurd that it was at first not taken seriously by them at all.[64]

Vögtle concedes that an interest of the Jerusalem authorities in the fate of the corpse of Jesus would be understandable from the moment they perceived that the faith in the risen Jesus was a serious danger and temptation for the general public. But we can no longer determine how much time passed between Good Friday and this point of time. "The longer it lasted, all the more problematic appears the assumption that the Sanhedrin could and must have clarified whether the corpse of Jesus was still there or had disappeared."[65]

b) But independently of the interest of the Jerusalem authorities in the corpse of Jesus, was identification of the corpse of Jesus possible at all? Hans Küng points out that the disciples did not begin proclaiming the risen Christ immediately after Easter. In fact, "the time of the first resurrection-preaching (before what audience, how publicly?) in Jerusalem after the death of Jesus is not exactly known to us."[66] Even presupposing the accuracy of the information in the Acts of the Apostles, this proclamation only began on Pentecost, fifty days after the resurrection. "All this made verification very difficult, particularly since the preaching can hardly have created much of a stir at the beginning or called for public control in a city of perhaps twenty-five to thirty thousand inhabitants."[67] G. O'Collins observes that any remains of someone buried weeks before at the time of the passover would hardly have been identifiable. "Producing a corpse in a more or less advanced state of decomposition would not have worked."[68]

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[64]Vögtle and Pesch, *Osterglauben*, 89-91; cf. Oberlinner, "Die Verkündigung," 172.

[65]Vögtle and Pesch, *Osterglauben*, 92.

[66]Rudolf Pesch, "Die Entstehung des Auferstehungsglaubens," *Theologische Quartelschrift* 153 (1973), 206 (author's own translation).

[67]H. Küng, *On Being a Christian*, 364.

[68]O'Collins, *Interpreting Jesus*, 127.

HISTORICAL CONCLUSION

This survey of arguments for and against the historicity of the discovery of the empty tomb of Jesus illustrates the inconclusiveness of the arguments on the historical level. To the article of L. Oberlinner, who based himself in part upon the positions of A. Vögtle and R. Pesch, J. Kremer recently commented: "The arguments of Oberlinner are worth consideration but are not probative enough."[69] It is true that the arguments of Oberlinner, Pesch and Vögtle do not prove that the tomb was not discovered to be empty, but they do undermine the presuppositions and the force of the arguments that the tomb was discovered to be empty. They show that it is unrealistic to continue to speak of "a degree of probability bordering on certitude" or "the very considerable probability if not historical certainty" in reference to these arguments.[70] It appears that R. Pesch is correct in concluding that the discovery of the empty tomb of Jesus by women on the first day of the week after Jesus' death and burial cannot count as historically assured. At the same time, he rightly observes that this judgement does not allow the conclusion that the factuality of the discovery of the empty tomb is disproved, nor does it exclude a future change in this historical judgement on the basis of new material or of more reliable historical analyses using better criteriology.[71]

On the other hand, the arguments of Oberlinner, Pesch and Vögtle are not sufficiently probative to deprive the arguments in favor of the actual discovery of the empty tomb of all probability. In particular, they cannot eliminate a certain probability for the historicity of the discovery of the empty tomb by women deriving from the combination of arguments 2), 3), 4): 2) the semitism τῇ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων ("on the first day of the week"), 3) the verisimilitude of

[69]Kremer, "Auferstehung," 188.

[70]Cf. n. 46 above.

[71]Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, II Teil, 536-537, n. 36.

the visit to the tomb, and 4) women as the discoverers. Furthermore, in underlining the influence of the "search and non-discoverability" genre on the formulation of Mk. 16:1-8, R. Pesch affirmed, "On the basis of the faith in Jesus' resurrection—under the influence of door-opening-miracle traditions and epiphany traditions—the search for and non-discoverability of his (Jesus') corpse is narrated, however in a very independent form."[72] This raises the question concerning the basis for this independence and the reason for the modification of the literary genre.[73] A likely explanation is that a tradition of an actual visit of women to the tomb and their discovery of its emptiness was an influential factor in the formulation of the narrative and set limits to the influence of the genre. It is to be noted also that the women's visit to the tomb is a "search" only in a very weak sense, since they know where the body of Jesus should be found (unlike the disciples of Elijah in 2 Kgs. 2:16-18). The alternative: kerygmatic proclamation of the Easter faith or history is a false alternative in view of the Christian-Jewish mode of narration.

THEOLOGICAL CONCLUSION

Even though the actual discovery of the empty tomb of Jesus is not historically assured, theology has reason to affirm that the tomb was actually empty. "Many 'factual' assertions concerning sacred history, no doubt, rest not on direct recollections coming from eye witnesses, but rather on inferences made in the light of faith, from truths of the doctrinal order," e.g., the sinlessness of Christ and his Mother, the perpetual virginity of Mary. For as the Church contemplates the mysteries of faith in their organic relationship, the sense of faith, kept constantly alive under the action of the Holy Spirit, communicates a sense of the inner quality of the persons and events in which she has encountered God, and "this qualitative sense in turn gives rise to

[72]Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, II Teil, 527.

[73]Kolping, *Fundamentaltheologie*, Bd. III/1, 518.

intimations and assurances concerning what could have, could not have or must have happened."[74]

The Church has not made an explicit definition concerning whether the empty tomb is an implication of the mystery of Jesus' resurrection. But it is the function of the theologian to explicitate what is implied in the mystery of the resurrection in its organic interconnection with the other mysteries of faith. He thus contributes to the growth in understanding of what is contained in the Church's consciousness of faith in its lived contact with the mystery of Christ witnessed in Scripture and present in the Church's life.

1. A starting point for theological reflection on the mystery of the resurrection is the traditional, pre-Pauline formula that Paul made use of in 1 Cor. 15:3-5:

> For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

How did the men to whom it owes its origin understand the resurrection of Jesus from the dead? On the basis of an analysis of the semantic structure of the formula which explicitates the semantic relations present in the figure of style used (the enumerative mode of speech), F. Mussner answers: "They understood the resurrection of Jesus from the dead as the resurrection of the crucified and buried body of Jesus." As a consequence, his tomb was empty. "That is not a theological postulate but the result of an analysis of the semantic relations of the formula used." It is a biblical interpretation of the resurrection which deserves to be taken seriously.[75]

2. More is involved here than a time-conditioned presupposition of Palestinian Jewish Christians due to a particular anthropology.

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[74]Avery Dulles, *Unpublished Treatise on Revelation*, chap. IV, 17-18.

[75]Mussner, "Struktur," 414-415.

Reflection on the mystery of the resurrection in the context of the mysteries of incarnation and redemption confirms this. The mystery of the resurrection is the mystery of the definitive and total self-communication of God to the total reality of Jesus of Nazareth as the revelation and initiation of the definitive self-communication of God to the world as its salvation.[76] Precisely for this reason, it was necessary that the resurrection of Jesus be a bodily resurrection from the tomb. Because Jesus' corporeal humanity is a permanent part of the one world with its single dynamic tendency, the resurrection of *this* bodily humanity, and therefore of *this* dead body "is objectively the beginning of the transfiguration of the world as an ontologically unified event, because in this event the fate of the world has been decided in principle and has already begun."[77] K. Rahner affirms that there is a real ontological unity of the material universe, a basic oneness of the world by which all things in the world are related and communicate before any mutual influence upon each other.[78] By the incarnation, the Logos has united to Himself once and for all a portion of this world, and indeed a portion of its material reality. In view of the unity of the material universe, it is important that the dead body of Jesus, a portion of the material reality of this one world, should have been transformed and glorified, for the actual transformation of this material world, which will be perfected one day in the Parousia, "must have a beginning somewhere in this world, if the new heaven and the new earth is to be a reality which is not an absolutely new beginning but—despite all discontinuity with the present cosmos—the

[76]Karl Rahner, "Auferstehung Christi, IV," in Karl Rahner, et al., *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, Bd. I (Freiburg: Herder, 1957), col. 1038 (all translations from this source are the author's own).

[77]Rahner, "Auferstehung Christi, IV," col. 1040; Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler, *Concise Theological Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (London: Burns & Oates, 1983), 442.

[78]Karl Rahner, *On the Theology of Death* (London: Nelson, 1961), 27.

continuation of the original creation."[79] The transformation of the dead body of Jesus in the resurrection from the tomb was the beginning of the transformation of this material cosmos through which it is actually in process of attaining in and through the risen Jesus that final state in which God will be all in all.[80] The empty tomb is necessary because of the unity of creation and salvation in God's plan of salvation. The risen body of Christ, that part of the material universe in which the future salvation, for which "the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now" (Rom. 8:22), already exists, is the physical center for mankind and the whole material world,[81] drawing the remainder of its unity toward the final goal.

3. Furthermore, that the resurrection of Jesus necessarily involves the empty tomb follows from the New Testament witness to Jesus' resurrection as his victory over death. "For we know," says Saint Paul, "that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him" (Rom. 6:9). The resurrection relates to a human existence which has been divinely transformed by the abolition of the dominion of death. Jesus has totally escaped death.

The body of Jesus placed in the tomb was, with his spirit, an integrating part of the proper being of Jesus of Nazareth which death had divided in itself. But E. Pousset points out that one cannot maintain simultaneously that Jesus has totally escaped death (resurrection and exaltation) and that the body placed in the tomb was dissolved in the

[79]Béla Weissmahr, "Kann Gott die Auferstehung Jesu durch innerweltliche Kräfte bewirkt haben?" *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* 100 (1978), 467 (author's own translation).

[80]Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations* I (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961), 165.

[81]Cf. Christopher Mooney, "The Body of Christ in the Writings of Teilhard de Chardin," *Theological Studies* 25 (1964), 576-578.

universe.[82] As forming part of his proper being, this body placed in the tomb had to be recovered and transformed in the resurrection and integrated in the undivided unity of the risen Christ if the dominion of death over him has really been destroyed. "To claim that Christ has been removed from death forever, presupposes that this victory has been won *on the battlefield itself*, and that it is in the actual *body* itself, in which death at first won its victory, that life in turn is to win its own everlasting victory."[83] It was necessary that death be conquered on the field of its own triumph, i.e., in this very body which had been subjected to suffering and death.[84] "The only resurrection to which the Gospel bears witness affects Jesus Christ in the *fullness of his body*, just as death did. By transfiguring his body without destroying it, it removes from it all relationship with the world of death."[85]

What happened to Jesus in his resurrection cannot be reduced to what will happen to us in ours. The resurrection of Jesus is unique and belongs to the particularity of the person and destiny of the Son of God. G. O'Collins underlines two things which could be said about the corpse of Jesus which could never be said about any other corpse in human history. "*First*, this corpse had been the body which suffered on the cross once and for all to save all."[86] It was fitting, therefore, that what was the instrument of universal salvation should be raised in a transformed existence and participate in the continuing redemptive activity of the risen Christ as principle and source of divine life.

"*Second*, this lifeless corpse had been the body of the Son of God

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[82]Edouard Pousset, "Resurrection de Jesus et message pascal," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 94 (1972), 105.

[83]Gustave Martelet, *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World* (London: Collins, 1976), 75 (hereafter cited as *The Risen Christ*).

[84]Yves Congar, "Bulletin de Theologie," *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 59 (1975), 467.

[85]Martelet, *The Risen Christ*, 76.

[86]O'Collins, *Interpreting Jesus*, 128.

during his earthly life."[87] It was fitting, therefore, that it be speedily integrated into the transfiguring resurrection which constituted the son of David as Son of God in power (Rom. 1:3-4).

CONCLUSION

The early Christians who expressed their faith in the old traditional formula quoted by Paul in 1 Cor. 15:3-5 understood the resurrection of Jesus as the resurrection of the crucified and buried body of Jesus. Can we understand it any differently? Reflection on the mystery of the resurrection in the context of the total mystery of Christ suggests that we cannot.

[87]O'Collins, *Interpreting Jesus*, 128.

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THE RESURRECTION APPEARANCES AND THE ORIGIN OF THE EASTER FAITH

Joseph J. Smith, S.J.

Fundamental theology studies the resurrection in order to show the credibility and validity of the Easter faith. Two questions are to be distinguished here: (1) the historical question concerning the origin of the Easter faith, i.e., how did the first Christians attain the conviction that the crucified Jesus was risen? (2) the question of principle concerning the permanently valid objective foundation of the Easter faith.[1]

This study concentrates on the first question concerning the origin of the Easter faith: after the disaster of Good Friday, how did the unanimous conviction arise concerning the resurrection of the crucified Jesus? No New Testament writing gives a description of

[1]"The two questions are to be distinguished, because the (possibly fortuitous) genesis of a conviction does not already guarantee its (unconditioned) validity; because, therefore, clarification must first be made whether that which produced the Easter conviction of the primitive community, can also supply the justification for a contemporary faith in the resurrection or whether this justification can be found in a different manner" (Hans Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden nicht bei den Toten* [Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1985], 136 [hereafter cited as *Sucht den Lebenden*], all translations from this source are the author's own).

Jesus' resurrection or claims that anyone witnessed the actual event of the resurrection.

> Because in the New Testament no immediate witness of the occurrence of the resurrection is named and therefore no knowledge of it has reached us, this event remains in the strict sense theological, i.e., the resurrection of Jesus Christ is an occurrence hidden in the reality of the mysterious God, which in its full eschatological-transcendent dimension is withdrawn from human knowledge.[2]

The resurrection of Jesus is not directly accessible to us. According to the New Testament witness, it was the passage into the eschatological form of existence with God, therefore the beginning of a radically new, indestructible life. "We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died he died ... once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God" (Rom. 6:9-10; cf. Acts 13:34). Accordingly, the event of the resurrection transcends the realm of what is verifiable historically. "And its result, the risen One, cannot be simply an empirically perceptible reality; he does not belong to our world of sense experience ... and is therefore not subject to the conditions of objectifying knowledge; he transcends the conditions of historical knowledge."[3] As a consequence, the historian and his methods have no access to the resurrection of Jesus itself and to the reality of the risen One. The last historical fact available to them is the Easter faith of the first disciples and the astonishing reversal of their behaviour within a short period after the disaster of Good Friday.

On the one hand, the execution of Jesus on the cross was a catastrophe which shook the foundations of their incipient faith in him. During his ministry, Jesus had raised a previously unheard-of claim

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[2]Karl Lehmann, "Zur Frage nach dem 'Wesen' der Erscheinungen des Herm," in *Resurrexit*, ed. Edouard Dhanis (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1974), 297 (hereafter cited as "Zur Frage"), all translations from this source are the author's own.

[3]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 137; cf. 138-139.

to authority as the eschatological mediator of salvation and agent of the Kingdom of God.[4] But he had died the shameful and scandalous death of the cross,[5] which in the Jewish world meant that he died under the curse of God.[6] In this context, Jesus' claim to be the agent of the inbreaking rule of the merciful God appeared to be refuted publicly by God himself. For the Jewish authorities and the Jewish public, the question concerning the validity of Jesus' claim was settled once and for all. He had been exposed as a false prophet.

Against this background, "the confusion in the circle of disciples" and the sudden return of the "twelve" to Galilee "is easy to understand."[7] Jesus' execution on the cross at the initiative of the highest religious court of judgement in Israel, the guardians of Israel's

[4]Anton Vögtle, "Der verkündigende und der verkündigte Jesus 'Christus'," in *Wer ist Jesus Christus?* ed. Joseph Sauer (Freiburg: Herder, 1977), 37-48 (hereafter cited as "Jesus 'Christus'"), all translations from this source are the author's own.

[5]Cf. Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion* (London: SCM Press, 1977), 6-10.

[6]On the basis of a pre-Christian interpretation of Dt. 21:23b ("God's curse rests on him who hangs on a tree." NAB), crucified persons "are accursed of God and of men" (Temple Scroll 64:12; also cf. 4QPNah. 7f.; 4QPHab. 8); quoted in Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 105, with reference to Johann Maier, *Die Tempelrolle vom Toten Meer* (Munich: Reinhardt, 1978). Gal. 3:13 also gives an idea of the effect the crucifixion of Jesus must have had on a pious Jew.

[7]Gerhard Lohfink, "Der Ablauf der Osterereignisse und die Anfänge der Urgemeinde," *Tübinger Quartelschrift* 160 (1980), 163 (hereafter cited as "Der Ablauf"), author's own translation. The return of the "Twelve" to Galilee is well attested (Mk. 14:28; 16:7; Jn. 16:32) and "today with reason is almost universally reckoned with" (Anton Vögtle in Anton Vögtle and Rudolf Pesch, *Wie Kam es zum Osterglauben?* [Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1975], 73 [hereafter cited as *Osterglauben*], all translations from this source are the author's own). Lohfink adds that one of the most certain indications of the return of the Galilean disciples to their home province is the phenomenon that the first appearances to the "Twelve" took place not in Jerusalem but in Galilee. Cf. Lohfink, "Der Ablauf," 164 and Thorwald Lorenzen, "Ist der Auferstandene in Galiläa erschienen?" *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 64 (1973), 209-221.

religious-cultic order of law, was well-qualified to raise the question, even in the minds of his closest disciples, whether in fact his death was not a divine judgement on him. "Now, only the endtime Judge himself could pronounce the final word as to whether Jesus had been right or wrong.... Without confirmation of Jesus by God himself, the possibility of discipleship was shattered."[8] A. Vögtle concludes that the actual reaction of the "twelve," their return to Galilee, is most naturally explained as "an eloquent expression of the collapse which his death objectively signified for their situation within the Israel of that time."[9] Luke's graphic portrayal of the disillusionment and hopelessness of the followers of Jesus as the result of the crucifixion of Jesus by the Jewish authorities (Lk. 24:20-21) is hardly a distortion of the historical reality.[10]

On the other hand, the historian discovers that a short time later, the same circle of the "twelve" returned to Jerusalem, the hostile and dangerous center of Jesus' enemies, where they now fearlessly proclaimed Jesus' resurrection from the dead, and actively gathered Jesus' adherents into the primitive Christian community.

This surprising transformation of the disciples confronts the historian with the question concerning its cause. "That something decisive happened at Easter cannot reasonably be doubted even from (the) purely historical point of view."[11] M. Dibelius has given classic

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[8]Ulrich Wilckens, "Die Überlieferungsgeschichte der Auferstehung Jesu," in *Die Bedeutung der Auferstehungsbotschaft für den Glauben an Jesus Christus*, ed. Fritz Viering (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1966), 54 (hereafter cited as "Überlieferungsgeschichte"), author's own translation. English translation: "The Tradition-History of the Resurrection of Jesus," in *The Significance of the Message of the Resurrection for Faith in Jesus Christ*, ed. Charles F. D. Moule (London: SCM Press, 1968), 64-65 (hereafter cited as "Tradition-History").

[9]Vögtle in Vögtle and Pesch, *Osterglauben*, 73, quoting Wilckens, "Überlieferungsgeschichte," 54.

[10]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 107.

[11]Eduard Schweizer, *Jesus* (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1971), 46.

formulation to this judgement. "Something must have happened in between, which in a short time not only produced a complete reversal of their attitude but also enabled them to engage in renewed activity.... This 'something' is the historical kernel of the Easter faith."[12] What was this "something," postulated by the historian, that produced the Easter faith?

I. THE WITNESS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

The earliest pre-Pauline confessional statements concerning the resurrection of Jesus as a rule do not mention the basis for the conviction that Jesus had been raised from the dead. In his first letter (around 50 A.D.), Paul quotes an old formula of faith which simply states that "Jesus died and rose again" (1 Thess. 4:14). In the same letter, Paul makes use of an ancient confession of faith which contains the formula, " ... his son ... whom he raised from the dead...." (1 Thess. 1:10). The kerygmatic formula quoted by Paul in the letter to the Romans simply affirms that "God raised him from the dead" (Rom. 10:9).

However, the very old "catechetical summary of the heart of the gospel"[13] in 1 Cor. 15:3-5 expands the statement that "he was raised"

[12]Martin Dibelius, *Jesus* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 141.

[13]Leonhard Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament* I (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1981), 233 (hereafter cited as *Theology*). Goppelt affirms that the formula "came from early Greek-speaking Jewish Christianity and probably went back to an Aramaic prototype. Presumably Paul appropriated this formula immediately after his conversion in Damascus or three years later during his first visit in Jerusalem (Gal. 1:18), i.e., three to six years after Jesus' exit. This formula, however, did not merely reach back very close to the origin of Easter faith; it found general acceptance as well. In 1 Cor. 15:11, Paul emphasized that he was in agreement with the apostles of Jerusalem in this proclamation" (Goppelt, *Theology*, 233). J. Kremer suggests that the formula was probably already formulated between 35 and 40 A.D. (Jacob Kremer, "Die Auferstehung Jesu Christi," in *Handbuch der Fundamentaltheologie*, Bd. II: *Traktat Offenbarung*, eds.

with the affirmation that "he appeared (ὤφθη) to Cephas, then to the twelve" (v. 5; also cf. v. 7 and the old liturgical formula in Lk. 24:34). Paul Hoffmann explains that this latter statement in v. 5 serves the purpose of "confirming the resurrection statement by recourse to the experiences of the witnesses."[14] In other words, "old, pre-Pauline tradition appeals to happenings ('appearances' of the risen One) that occurred to definite persons in their world as the cause of faith in the resurrection of Jesus."[15] From his own experience, Paul corroborates this early testimony for his own person (1 Cor. 15:8-10, 9:1; Gal. 1:12.15-16; compare Phil. 3:8-12; 2 Cor. 4:4-6, 5:16). Finally, the gospels later reaffirm and illustrate it with great variety in their appearance narratives.

Consequently, according to testimony formulated within a few years of the death of Jesus and confirmed by Paul's personal testimony to his own experience, the "something" that produced the historically ascertainable reversal of the disciples' attitude was a new experience of the disciples, the experience of the "appearance"[16] of

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Walter Kern, Hermann Pottmeyer and Max Seckler [Freiburg: Herder, 1985], 182 [hereafter cited as "Auferstehung Jesu Christi"], all translations from this source are the author's own). For a nuanced summary of the harvest to be gathered from the wide-ranging discussion of 1 Cor. 15:3ff. in recent years, cf. Joseph Schmitt, "Resurrection de Jésus dans le kerygme, la tradition, la catechèse," in *Supplement au Dictionnaire de la Bible* X, eds. Henri Cazelles and André Feuillet (Paris: Letouzey and Ané, 1985), 504-513 (hereafter cited as "Resurrection de Jésus"), all translations from this source are the author's own.

[14]Paul Hoffmann, "Auferstehung Jesu Christi (N.T.)," in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* IV, eds. Gerhard Krause and Gerhard Müller (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1979), 482 (hereafter cited as "Auferstehung Jesu Christi"), author's own translation.

[15]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 145.

[16]With Kessler, we retain the customary expression "appearances" "because it is broader than others (for example 'visions') and does not prematurely narrow the view of the reality to be explained, but holds it open" (Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 146).

the one who had been crucified. What was meant by this testimony needs further clarification.

The Pre-Pauline Tradition: 1 Cor. 15:3-5.6-7

The key to the understanding of the "appearances" of the risen Jesus and thus to the answer to the question, what produced the conviction of the disciples concerning the resurrection of Jesus, is to be found in the pre-Pauline traditions contained in 1 Cor. 15:3b-5.6-7. There is universal agreement among scholars that v. 3b is the beginning of a quotation of formulated tradition,[17] and there is a wide consensus that this quotation terminates in v. 5.[18] In opposition to U. Wilckens and R. Fuller, who have argued that the tradition in vv. 3b-5 is a combination of four originally independent statements,[19] J. Murphy-O'Connor has recently strengthened the majority view that the tradition in vv. 3b-5 represents a substantive and formal unity:

> (that) Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures;
> and (that) he was buried;
> and (that) he was raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures; and (that) he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.[20]

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[17]"The words (in v. 3a) translated in the Revised Standard Version as 'delivered' and 'received' are technical terms indicating the handing on of earlier traditions" (Reginald Fuller, "The Easter Event," in Reginald Fuller and Pheme Perkins, *Who Is This Christ?* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983], 29 [hereafter cited as "The Easter Event"]).

[18]Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "Tradition and Redaction in 1 Cor 15:3-7," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 43 (1981), 582 (hereafter cited as "1 Cor 15:3-7").

[19]Reginald Fuller, *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), 11-14 (hereafter cited as *Formation*).

[20]Murphy-O'Connor, "1 Cor 15:3-7," 583-584. The "that" is placed in parentheses, because Paul may have introduced it into the formula "as a technique of listing each item." See Pheme Perkins, *Resurrection: New Testament Witness and Contemporary Reflection* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1984), 88 (hereafter cited

Verses 6-7 are set off from the traditional formula (vv. 3b-5) by a change in grammatical structure, but they also contain traditional material. J. Murphy-O'Connor argues that v. 6 ("Afterwards he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep") was composed by Paul on the basis of information drawn from an earlier tradition (the reference to the "five hundred") and his own personal knowledge, in order to show that the resurrection could be verified.[21] Verse 7, however, contains an additional piece of formulated pre-Pauline tradition ("Afterwards he appeared to James, then to the apostles.").[22]

The old formula contained in vv. 3b-5 "came from early Greek-speaking Jewish Christianity and probably went back to an Aramaic prototype."[23] The Christian communities which come into question as the most likely place of formulation are (1) the early Hellenistic-Jewish Christian center, Antioch, and (2) Jerusalem, the originally bi-lingual primitive community with a Greek-speaking Jewish Christian component. But in any case, "the 'Hellenists' of Jerusalem (cf. Acts 6:1-6) could at least have had a determining role in the transmission of the initial, aramaic datum to the hellenistic churches of Syria."[24] For the formula's contribution to our understanding of the "appearances" of the risen Jesus, the following points deserve emphasis.

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as *Resurrection*). The copulative "and" is "an original and ... fundamental element of the fragment" (Schmitt, "Resurrection de Jésus," 504-505).

[21]Murphy-O'Connor, "1 Cor 15:3-7," 585-586, 589; Perkins, *Resurrection*, 89.

[22]Murphy-O'Connor, "1 Cor 15:3-7," 587; Schmitt, "Resurrection de Jésus," 498 and 538. Murphy-O'Connor argues persuasively that Paul added the "all" in "then to all the apostles" (v. 7b), in order to prepare for his "presentation of himself as an 'apostle' of equal authority (v. 9)." Cf. Murphy-O'Connor, "1 Cor 15:3-7," 587-589.

[23]Goppelt, *Theology*, 233. Also cf. Schmitt, "Resurrection de Jésus," 508-511; Fuller, *Formation*, 11.

[24]Schmitt, "Resurrection de Jésus," 511; cf. 508-511. Also see Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 147.

1. The Reliability of the Data Concerning Witnesses of "Appearances"

According to the early tradition quoted by Paul, the recipients of appearances are (in order of their listing): Cephas, the twelve, more than five hundred brethren (who around the year 55 A.D., except for some who had died, may still be questioned), James, the brother of the Lord, and the apostles.[25] "Everything speaks for the fact that not only Paul and the tradition quoted by him, but also *the persons named were themselves convinced* that they had encountered Jesus after his real death (cf. the authenticating "buried") as present with new vitality, that means, as risen." We know from Paul's letters that Paul visited Jerusalem three years after his conversion (ca. 34-37 A.D.), stayed with Peter fifteen days and also spoke with James (Gal. 1:18-19). Of the twelve, he certainly knew Peter and John (cf. Gal. 2:9). Of the other witnesses, he certainly knew James and some of the more than five hundred (cf. 1 Cor. 15:6). Besides, he collaborated for extended periods with Barnabas and John Mark, members of the Jerusalem church (cf. Acts 4:36, 11:22-23, 12:12, 13:2ff., 13; 15:37ff.). H. Kessler concludes that, at least in its content, the tradition he received and handed on in 1 Cor. 15:3b-5.6-7 cannot contradict what he learned from the witnesses themselves. In 1 Cor. 15:11, Paul expressly emphasized that his testimony was in agreement with the testimony of the other apostles. "In the argumentation of 1 Cor. 15, it is precisely this common testimony on the basis of common witnessing of appearances that is decisive for Paul."[26]

2. The Appearance Statements in 1 Cor. 15:5.7

In the pre-Pauline traditions, the Easter "happening" which grounds the Easter faith of the disciples is expressed by the appearance

[25]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 147.

[26]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 147.

statement (ὤφθη[27] + dative; 1 Cor. 15:5.7; cf. Lk. 24:34). The fact that the persons named as recipients of the appearances are, apart from the "more than 500," authority figures of the early community has influenced the form critical analysis of the appearance statements and the definition of their "*Sitz-im-Leben.*" U. Wilckens classified these statements as "legitimation formulae," which were *originally* handed on not as evidences of the resurrection and proofs of the credibility of the resurrection preaching—this was presupposed—but "as proofs of legitimation" of the men who on the basis of their commissioning "through the authority of the risen One," had permanent authority in the church.[28] As used in 1 Cor. 15, however, the old legitimation formula no longer possesses its original function. "The mention of

[27]ὤφθη is the aorist passive form of the verb ὁράω which has the meanings: "see," "catch sight of," "notice," also "experience," "witness." In the appearance statements of 1 Cor. 15:5.7, ὤφθη is followed by a noun in the dative case, e.g., ὤφθη κηφᾷ (v. 5a). Two translations have been defended. 1) ὤφθη is understood as a theological passive and translated: "he was made visible to Cephas by God." See Karl H. Rengstorf, *Die Auferstehung Jesu* (Witten: Luther Verlag, 1960), 55-59; Gerhard Friedrich, "Die Auferweckung Jesu, eine Tat Gottes oder ein Interpretament der Jünger?" *Kerygma und Dogma* 17 (1971), 156-157. 2) ὤφθη is understood as a passive with intransitive deponent meaning (cf. Robert Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament* [Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961], no. 313) and translated into "he made himself visible to Cephas" or "he appeared to Cephas" or "he showed himself to Cephas" (A. Vögtle, J. Kremer, X. Leon-Dufour). Since the New Testament use of ὤφθη + dative was most probably influenced by the deponent usage of the Septuagint in its translation of the theophany texts of the Hebrew Old Testament, A. Vögtle contends that the second translation (2), in which the "factitive" is to be underlined, is to be preferred and is the one most often chosen today. See Vögtle in Vögtle and Pesch, *Osterglauben*, 38-39; also Jacob Kremer, *Das älteste Zeugnis von der Auferstehung Christi* (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1967), 54-55; Xavier Leon-Dufour, *Resurrection and Message of Easter* (London: Chapman, 1974), 43 (hereafter cited as *Resurrection*); André Pelletier, "Les apparitions du Ressuscité en terms de la Septante," *Biblica* 51 (1970), 76-79.

[28]Ulrich Wilckens, *Auferstehung* (Stuttgart: Kreuz Verlag, 1970), 147-148; cf. idem, "Tradition-History," 58-61.

his appearances ... is intended to confirm his raising by naming the witnesses of the risen Christ."[29]

R. Pesch took up Wilckens' interpretation of the appearance statements as legitimation formulae, but (contrary to Wilckens) reduced them to mere literary legitimation formulae accrediting early Christian bearers of authority. "The (ὤφθη) formula names the authoritative, the authorized witnesses of this kerygma; it legitimizes them. Whether it at the same time gives information concerning the origin of their faith, which they express in the kerygma, remains questionable."[30] He concluded that no special experience lay at the basis of the formula and that the statement "He appeared to x" gives no information about the origin of the Easter faith. "Therefore, the explanation of the origin of the faith in the resurrection of Jesus as a revealed faith effected by God cannot be accomplished through the reference to appearances with the help of 1 Cor. 15:5ff."[31]

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[29]Wilckens, "Tradition-History," 58.

[30]Rudolf Pesch, "Zur Entstehung des Glaubens an die Auferstehung Jesu," *Theologische Quartelschrift* 153 (1973), 215 (hereafter cited as "Zur Entstehung"), all translations from this source are the author's own.

[31]Pesch, "Zur Entstehung," 218. In a subsequent study, Pesch conceded that it is possible that a legitimizing experience (ecstatic Christ-vision) could have corresponded to the legitimation formula. Yet in this case, it should be held that "these Christophanies were defined in content by the appointment of Peter as Cephas and the confirmation of the Twelve. The faith in Jesus as the risen/exalted Christ would then be presupposed as foundation of the Christophany on the side of Simon and the Twelve, rather than be derived from this Christophany" (Rudolf Pesch, "Materialien und Bemerkungen zu Entstehung und Sinn des Osterglaubens," in Vögtle and Pesch, *Osterglauben*, 156).

According to this interpretation of the origin of the Easter faith, the disciples would have attained faith in the resurrection of Jesus independently of appearances. Through their pre-Easter encounter with Jesus, they would have been convinced that he was the prophetic Messiah (Mk. 8:27-30). In the light of Jesus' explanation of the salvific significance of his death and against the background of contemporary Jewish traditions of the martyrdom and resurrection

In response to R. Pesch, exegetes concede that the idea of the special position and authority of Cephas and the twelve also comes to expression in the pre-Pauline formula, 1 Cor. 15:3b-5. But the critical point is the hypothesis that the pre-Pauline "he appeared" was used *exclusively* as a legitimation formula, which gives no information about the ground of the Easter faith. Against this speaks the very structure of the traditional formula. "According to the well founded and generally accepted view, this structure speaks decidedly for the fact that 'he was buried' proves the real, definitive death of Christ and the 'he appeared' correspondingly is meant to serve as corroboration of the resurrection statement."[32] Furthermore, J. Kremer points out that in the pre-Pauline formula, "'he appeared' already stands in a series with three other statements concerning an event and therefore must likewise be

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of eschatological prophetic figures, the disciples would have been in a position to interpret the fate of Jesus as the fate of the eschatological-messianic prophet rejected by men but accepted by God, and to make the new decision of faith in the confession of Jesus' resurrection demanded in view of the crucified Jesus. With the message "He is risen," they proclaimed the definitive eschatological significance of the crucified Jesus. This confession of Jesus' resurrection was simply a new form of the faith in Jesus of Nazareth, namely its confirmation and deepening in face of his death. Cf. Pesch, "Zur Entstehung," 219-228; also cf. Pesch's brief summary of his 1973 proposal in Rudolf Pesch, "Zur Entstehung des Glaubens an die Auferstehung Jesu. Ein neuer Versuch," *Freiburger Zeitschrift fur Philosophie und Theologie* 30 (1983), 82-84. In this article, Pesch retracts his earlier proposal that the disciples came to faith in Jesus' resurrection independently of appearances of the risen Jesus. He now holds that the appearances of the risen One are sufficiently guaranteed as historical events (Pesch, "Zur Entstehung des Glaubens an die Auferstehung Jesu. Ein neuer Versuch," 87). For his development, present position and a critique, see Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 191-208; John Galvin, "The Origin of Faith in the Resurrection of Jesus: Two Recent Perspectives," *Theological Studies* 49 (1988), 26-34.

[32]Vögtle in Vögtle and Pesch, *Osterglauben*, 156; Wilckens, "Tradition-History," 58. Also cf. Hans Bartsch, "Inhalt und Funktion des urchristlichen Osterglaubens," *New Testament Studies* 26 (1979-80), 182-183 (hereafter cited as "Inhalt und Funktion"), all translations from this source are the author's own.

understood as a statement about a real occurrence."[33] Thirdly, against Pesch's hypothesis stands 1 Cor. 15:6 (appearance before more than five hundred brethren) which certainly does not intend to legitimize early Christian authorities. Finally, it is clear that in the context of 1 Cor. 15:3-8, Paul does not understand the "he appeared to x," at least immediately and fundamentally, as a legitimation formula but by it appeals to the experiences of the witnesses of appearances to confirm the resurrection of Jesus which is foundational for his argumentation in 1 Cor. 15 (cf. vv. 6b and 11).[34]

Consequently, the conclusion is justified that "the appearance statement designates the past and completed (aorist ὤφθη) happening which was experienced by the disciples and caused the faith in Jesus' resurrection: *Because* he 'was brought to appearance/made visible' by God (divine passive) or because he 'brought himself to appearance/let himself be seen/appeared' (deponent),[35] his resurrection became known."[36] The immediately necessary conclusion from the content of the appearances was: "He is risen." The verb ὤφθη indicates that the initiating and acting subject of the entire happening is God or Jesus Christ, not the subjectivity of the disciples. The disciples are the recipients of the appearances. As recipients, they are actively engaged with their powers of perception: "they see the one who lets himself be seen."[37]

The linguistic background of the verb ὤφθη in both the Hebrew Old Testament and the Septuagint shows that the visual element (the making visible) is clearly contained in the verb ὤφθη and may not be eliminated in favor of its interpretation as a purely theological term of

[33]Kremer, "Auferstehung Jesu Christi," 185.

[34]Vögtle in Vögtle and Pesch, *Osterglauben*, 48, 50; Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 148.

[35]Both translations are possible (see n. 27).

[36]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 149.

[37]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 149.

revelation.[38] J. Schmitt affirms that for the Judaeo-Christians familiar with the Hebrew and Greek expressions of the Old Testament, the word ὤφθη, which corresponds to the niphal of *ra'ah*, offers a precise, specific meaning. "It translates the visual perception of a person or of an object which, belonging to the real but invisible world of the divine, cannot become perceptible to man except by a gracious dispensation, lifting for a moment its essential invisibility."[39] In the appearance statements of 1 Cor. 15, there is question "of a becoming visible and a new encounter with the risen One."[40] However, as H. Kessler points out, the verb ὤφθη leaves the concrete mode of this becoming visible in darkness. "But in any case, the appearance statement is the precipitate of what was really experienced ... that original experience of the disciples which is the root of the resurrection faith."[41]

3. Closer Determination of the Content of the "Appearance" Statement

Since 1 Cor. 15:3b-5.6-7 was formulated in Greek under the

[38]Cf. Hoffmann, "Auferstehung Jesu Christi," 492-493; Vögtle in Vögtle and Pesch, *Osterglauben*, 42-43, against W. Michaelis who affirms: " ... when ὤφθη is used as a technical term to denote the resurrection appearances ... the dominant thought is that the appearances are revelations, encounters with the risen Lord who herein reveals himself, or is revealed.... The appearances are to be described as manifestations in the sense of revelation rather than making visible" (Wilhelm Michaelis, "ὁράω," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* V, ed. Gerhard Friedrich [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1967], 358-359; also cf. 326-327, 331-333 [hereafter cited as "ὁράω"]). H. Bartsch comments: "It is arbitrary and grounded only in a theological postulate, when W. Michaelis ... interprets the appearances of God merely as 'word revelation'" (Bartsch, "Inhalt und Funktion," 184, n. 8).

[39]Schmitt, "Resurrection de Jésus," 543.

[40]Peter Stuhlmacher, "Kritischer müssten mir die Historisch-Kritischen sein!," *Theologische Quartelschrift* 153 (1973), 249 (author's own translation).

[41]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 149.

influence of Septuagint language,[42] and since, in particular, the use of ὤφθη in the appearance statement was most probably influenced by Septuagint usage,[43] this linguistic background has to be considered in the closer determination of the content of the appearance statement. In the Septuagint, ὤφθη + dative was used in theophany and angelophany texts to express the appearance (self-showing) of God, his angel or his glory (e.g., LXX Gen. 12:7, 17:1, 18:1; LXX Ex. 3:2, 16:12; LXX Num. 20:6; LXX Jgs. 6:12, 13:3; LXX 3 Kgs. 3:5, 9:2, 11:9). It is theophany terminology for designating the self-manifesting salvific presence of God. In the understanding of the Septuagint, on the one hand, this presence was limited to three periods of Israel's past: 1) the time of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, 2) the time of the wandering in the desert, 3) the time of Kings David and Solomon.[44] In the history of Israel after Solomon, "Yahweh no longer appears in the way that he appeared to the forefathers and David/Solomon. This is all the more striking as the bible reports ... of the powerful visions of Ezechiel and Isaiah. But never is it said of a prophet as of Abraham or Solomon: ὤφθη κύριος αὐτῷ."[45]

On the other hand, this self-manifesting salvific presence of God

[42]Schmitt, "Resurrection de Jésus," 508-510; Goppelt, *Theology*, 233.

[43]Vögtle in Vögtle and Pesch, *Osterglauben*, 38-39; Hoffmann, "Auferstehung Jesu Christi," 492. L. Goppelt points out that the ὤφθη statements are to be clearly distinguished from the hellenistic narratives about the appearance of translated heroes or divine men (in which the technical term was εφάνη, not ὤφθη). See Goppelt, *Theology*, 235, n. 15, 241, n. 28.

[44]Bartsch explains that this terminology "is to be found for the last time—according to the historical chronology of the events, not of the literature, which for the LXX translator was uninteresting—" in 3 Kgs. 11:9. It is never used in reporting a prophetic vision (Bartsch, "Inhalt und Funktion," 184; cf. 184-189).

[45]Hans Bartsch, "Inhalt und Funktion des urchristlichen Osterglaubens," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, Teil II, Bd. XXV/1, eds. Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1982), 824 (author's own translation), quoted in Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 151.

was promised for the future in the eschatological promises of the prophets and psalms (e.g., LXX Is. 60:2; LXX Ps. 101:17),[46] and the linguistic usage of the post-biblical apocalypses provides evidence that this future expectation of the Septuagint prophets "corresponded to the apocalyptic expectation at the time of Jesus and of primitive Christianity." In these writings, "the awaited coming of the time of salvation is promised as an appearance of God or of his Messiah (= his Son)." But since this promise "corresponds with the fulfillment designated as ὤφθη κύριος or ἄγγελος or δόξα κυρίου," Bartsch concludes that for the first Christians, who formulated 1 Cor. 15:3b-5, "the sentence χριοτὸς ὤφθη κηφᾷ was meant to bear witness to the fulfillment of the prophetic promises as they are found above all in 2nd and 3rd Isaiah, but also in the psalms."[47] This means that when in 1 Cor. 15:5-7

> the encounter with the risen Messiah Jesus is expressed through ὤφθη with the dative ... it is characterized not merely as any kind of revelation happening, but as *the* event which manifests the end time-definitive saving presence of God, with which the end time saving presence of God has become reality.[48]

4. Result

The preceding analysis has shown that the ὤφθη in 1 Cor. 15:5-7 is a theologically reflected (but early) expression of a very extraordinary experience which was the origin of the resurrection faith. This Easter experience has as its content 1) Jesus' showing of himself as an occurrence (complete aorist ὤφθη) proceeding from the power of God, 2) "his state of being raised and exalted (durative perfect ἐγήγερται) in a completely new unity with God, from out of which he can—like the invisible Yahweh himself—make himself perceptibly present (appear)

[46]Cf. Bartsch, "Inhalt und Funktion," 189-190.

[47]Bartsch, "Inhalt und Funktion," 190-191.

[48]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 151.

and create witnesses to himself," and 3) this as the definitive beginning of the end time saving presence of God.[49]

Paul's Witness of His Own Experience

Paul confirms this testimony from his personal experience, the Damascus experience (1 Cor. 15:8-10, 9:1; Gal. 1:12.15-16; compare Phil. 3:8-12; 2 Cor. 4:4-6; 5:16).

1. The Different Terminology

In 1 Cor. 15:8, Paul places his Damascus experience in a series with the other appearances of the tradition and expresses it with the same traditional term (ὤφθη): "Last of all ... he appeared also to me." This means that Paul was convinced of the "qualitative equality" of his experience with the original Easter experiences.[50]

But Paul can speak of the same experience using different terminology. In defense of his legitimacy as an apostle and in the language of a prophetic call vision (cf. Is. 6:1.5), he can designate his experience as an apostolic call grounded in "seeing": "Have I not seen the Lord?" (1 Cor. 9:1).[51] Here Paul has reversed the traditional expression (ὤφθη) which emphasized the initiative of Christ and underlines his personal role in the event as active subject.[52] On another occasion, again in confrontation with opponents of his apostolate, Paul describes his Damascus experience in terms of a prophetic vocation and as a "revelation" or eschatological unveiling (ἀποκάλυψις) by God of a previously hidden reality: the risen Son of God as the essential content of the gospel Paul is called to proclaim (Gal. 1:12.15-16; cf.

[49]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 152-153.

[50]Vögtle in Vögtle and Pesch, *Osterglauben*, 60.

[51]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 153-154; cf. Vögtle in Vögtle and Pesch, *Osterglauben*, 65-66.

[52]Leon-Dufour, *Resurrection*, 56, 58.

Is. 49:1-6; Jer. 1:5; Is. 6:1-13).[53] Finally, Paul can characterize his Damascus experience as a "seizure" by Christ (Phil. 3:12: κατελήμφθαν = "I have been seized") which communicates an existential knowledge of the Lord and of the power of his resurrection (Phil. 3:8-10). By his action, Christ made Paul his own. "In Phil. 3:10 and 12, Paul uses the words δύναμις and καταλήμπσις to characterize ... the most intimate aspect of the Christophany of Damascus."[54]

2. *Conclusion from Paul's Testimony*

The importance of Paul's testimony can hardly be overestimated. Here we have the firsthand statements of one who personally experienced the "appearance" of the crucified and risen Jesus of Nazareth. For him it was a certainty which could not be open to question (cf. 1 Cor. 15:14-19).

As H. Kessler points out, it is clear from the texts that Paul understood what happened to him before Damascus not as *conversion*, a term Paul never uses when referring to it, but as *vocation* (apostolic call: cf. the clear contacts with prophetic call narratives).[55] All Paul's formulations of the Damascus experience (1] as the seeing of the Lord [1 Cor. 9:1], 2] as the unveiling of Jesus as the Son of God and the content of his gospel [Gal. 1:12.15-16], 3] as appearance of the dead, buried and risen Christ [1 Cor. 15:8], 4] as a being seized by Christ [Phil. 3:10-12]) contain the risen state of Jesus as essential element. "According to his own testimony as last and untimely witness of the

[53]Franz Mussner, *Der Galaterbrief* (Freiburg: Herder, 1974), 67-68, 81-87; Leon-Dufour, *Resurrection*, 47-51.

[54]Schmitt, "Resurrection de Jésus," 544-545.

[55]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 154; Fuller, *Formation*, 45. Kessler comments: "This distinction is not meaningless. Both categories have *a different structure* which can be decisive for the view of the matter. I myself am subject of my conversion (in connection with which a subjectively mediated divine activity need not be excluded). Subject of my vocation is another (who so addresses me that his call is experienced as one coming to me from outside" (Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 154, n. 42).

appearances of the risen One (1 Cor. 15:8), Paul has seen the Lord (exalted through the resurrection) (1 Cor. 9:1). This seeing has brought him knowledge of Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:8-10). According to Gal. 1:16, the content of this knowledge is Jesus as Son of God. Therefore, the knowledge mediated through the appearance of the risen Jesus brings for Paul the fundamental turning point of his life."[56]

3. The Damascus Experience and Later Ecstatic Experiences

Visions and Revelations. Another point is important for the evaluation of Paul's witness to the appearance of the risen Lord. Paul sharply distinguishes the appearance of the risen Jesus granted to him on the way to Damascus from his later visionary experiences and revelations of which he speaks especially in 2 Cor. 12:1-7. There he does not mention the encounter with Christ that grounded his apostolic call. In 1 Cor. 15:8, he expressly called the latter the "last of all" the appearances,[57] and he nowhere presents his visionary experiences and revelations as repetitions of the first and foundational revelation of the risen Jesus as Son of God which alone grounded his gospel and his mission-consciousness. The appearance of the risen Christ was a unique event. "In 1 Cor. 9:1 Paul did not expect that those he addressed had made or could make in the future the same experience. Therefore his encounter with the risen One may not be exchanged with the coming to faith as every Christian can experience it."[58]

4. The Pauline Damascus Experience in the Presentation of the Acts of the Apostles

The influence of the later Lukan presentation of Paul's Damascus

[56]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 154.

[57]Fuller, *Formation*, 42-43. This is the usual interpretation of ἔσχατου δὲ πάντων of v. 8. But Leon-Dufour says that he "would not be so bold as to adopt this interpretation" (Leon-Dufour, *Resurrection*, 57; also cf. 59).

[58]Kremer, "Auferstehung Jesu Christi," 184. Cf. idem, *Das älteste Zeugnis*, 59; Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 155.

experience on recent discussion of the origin of the Easter faith[59] makes it necessary to consider this version, at least briefly. Exegetes are in agreement that the conversion narratives in the book of Acts (Acts 9:1-22, 22:3-21, 26:1-23) "are not primary materials for the interpretation of Paul's Damascus road experience, but largely the product of Lukan theology."[60]

In contrast to Paul's testimony, Luke is silent about Paul's call to be an apostle of equal status with the twelve. According to the criteria given in the narrative of the choice of Matthias (Acts 1:21-26), Luke cannot consider Paul to be an apostle. Only one who had accompanied Jesus during his public ministry, beginning from the baptism of John, could be an apostle (Acts 1:21-22, 13:31). A second difference is that while Paul considers his Damascus experience to be an Easter appearance of the same nature as that of the twelve, Luke does not, since according to his conception the Easter appearances ended after forty days with the Ascension (Acts 1:9ff.). For Luke, Paul's Damascus experience "is merely a post-resurrection vision, precisely an ὀπτασία (Acts 26:19),"[61] which he distinguishes from "other heavenly visions—following his tradition—as a special act of self-manifestation of the risen and exalted One (Acts 26:14-18), through which Paul was called to be the special *witness* of the risen One in view of the mission to the Gentiles (Acts 26:16; cf. 22:15)."[62] Using "motifs of popular Hellenistic Jewish conversion stories (cf. for instance the novel *Joseph*

[59]Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), 360-385 (hereafter cited as *Jesus*).

[60]Fuller, "The Easter Event," 33; cf. idem, *Formation*, 44-47; Gerhard Lohfink, *Paulus vor Damaskus* (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1967), 41-91; Leon-Dufour, *Resurrection*, 63-79; Charles Hedrick, "Paul's Conversion/Call: A Comparative Analysis of the Three Reports in Acts," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 100 (1981), 415-432.

[61]Fuller, *Formation*, 45.

[62]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 156, referring to Christoph Burchard, *Der dreizehnte Zeuge* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1970), 119-124, who characterizes Luke's conception of the relation of Paul to the Twelve as follows: "Paul is

and Asenath) Luke presents Paul's Damascus experience, not as a resurrection appearance ... but precisely as a *conversion*, triggered by an overwhelming appearance of *light* from heaven (Acts 9:3f., cf. 22:6f., 26:13f.)."[63] This is a clear divergence from Paul's testimony. Paul does not understand his Damascus experience as a mere conversion (nor is the conversion terminology and its associated light-terminology found in the early appearance statements and in appearance narratives of the gospels). The conclusion is that the original Pauline understanding of the Damascus experience cannot be attained in the Lukan presentation in the Acts of the Apostles.[64]

II. EDWARD SCHILLEBEECKX AND THE ORIGIN OF THE EASTER FAITH

The preceding analysis of the early New Testament testimonies indicates that the Easter faith arose on the basis of a new experience of the disciples shortly after their experience of the catastrophic death of Jesus on the cross, and that this new experience had as its cause the encounter with and self-manifestation (appearance) of the crucified Jesus as the risen One. This does not yet explain how the encounter and self-manifestation are to be conceived more in detail.

In 1974, Edward Schillebeeckx proposed an interpretation of the Easter experience which does not depend on the acceptance of

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not one of them, but is the same as they" (Burchard, *Der dreizehnte Zeuge*, 136), author's own translation.

[63]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 157; cf. Fuller, *Formation*, 45.

[64]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 157. However, both Luke and Paul "agree about the reality of the event. Neither doubts that Paul was vouchsafed an appearance of the risen Christ" (Leon-Dufour, *Resurrection*, 77; cf. 76-79). "Although Luke looks back on Paul from a completely different temporal and theological perspective, in much he comes surprisingly near to him" (Lohfink, *Paulus vor Damaskus*, 89; cf. 85-89).

appearances or visions.[65] He explicitly affirms the personal resurrection of Jesus as a "real event accomplished by God in Jesus,"[66] and explicitly dissociates himself from the view "that the resurrection was achieved not in the person of Jesus but only in the believing disciples, as it were."[67] "Jesus' personal-cum-bodily resurrection" has "a logical and ontological priority" over the Easter experience and Easter faith of the disciples. Without the personal resurrection of Jesus, no Easter experience would be possible. But, conversely, "apart from the experience of Christian faith, the disciples had no organ that could afford them a sight of Jesus' resurrection."[68]

Interest and Intention

In *Jesus*, Schillebeeckx intended to undertake "a historical and genetic analysis" of the disciples' belief in Jesus' resurrection "as an event of and in our history."[69] He was concerned to show the historical and empirically tangible form through which the revelation-grace at the origin of the Easter faith was mediated, "the factors which can be reconstructed as a historical communication of the grace of the risen Jesus which brought the disciples to that belief."[70] Schillebeeckx insists that the revelation-grace through which Jesus' resurrection became accessible to the disciples was no "supernatural 'hocus pocus'," "no

[65]Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 320-397 (from a historical point of view); 518-571 (from a Christological point of view); 644-650 (an addition to the original Dutch edition: "The Intrinsic Significance of Jesus' Resurrection for Salvation"); Edward Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report on the Books "Jesus" and "Christ"* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 74-93 (hereafter cited as *Interim Report*).

[66]Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, 77, cf. 79; idem, *Jesus*, 645.

[67]Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 644.

[68]Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 645.

[69]Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, 75.

[70]Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, 75.

sudden 'incursion from above'" into the "normal" course of history.[71] Rather, it became "effective in and through psychological realities and human experiences,"[72] for God's revelatory initiative is manifested in (possibly "surprising, discontinuous" but) historical events and experiences accessible to human analysis which in themselves "are, like every historical phenomenon, ambiguous, ambivalent and calling for interpretation."[73]

Traditionally, fundamental theology pointed to the appearances of the risen Jesus as the foundation of the Easter faith of the disciples, and frequently the experience of the disciples was understood as a physical, objective "seeing" of Jesus, who showed himself in a manner which was physically and empirically ascertainable.[74]

According to Schillebeeckx, this understanding reflected the problematic and unacceptable conception of miraculous divine interventions in the causal context of this world.[75] In *Jesus*, Schillebeeckx's concern was to remove from the possible visual element in the Easter experience "the deep dogmatic significance which some people attach to it, namely of being the foundation of the whole of the Christian (resurrection-) faith."[76] It is neither the apologetic foundation of the faith nor a historical, genetic explanation of the origin of that faith. He maintains that "initially the appearances are not reported with any apologetic purpose in view, as a kind of proof of Jesus' resurrection.

[71]Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 649, 634; idem, *Interim Report*, 76.

[72]Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, 76.

[73]Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 634, 646.

[74]E.g., Albert Lang, *Die Sendung Christi* (Munich: Max Hueber Verlag, 1954), 249-251; more cautiously in the 4th ed. (1967), 273. Cited by Jacob Kremer, "Entstehung und Inhalt des Oster-Glaubens: Zur neuesten Diskussion," *Theologische Revue* 72 (1976), 3.

[75]Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, 82; idem, *Jesus*, 634.

[76]Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, 82.

At issue is the legitimation of the apostolic missionary mandate, not some confirmation of the resurrection having taken place."[77] In a "historical and genetic analysis,"[78] he uncovers as source of the Easter faith "more normal" human occurrences which can be generalized and which are comprehensible as disclosure-situations for a new disclosure-experience of Jesus.[79]

Since the resurrection of Jesus is a real, but "meta-empirical, meta-historical: 'eschatological'" event, in which, therefore, the disciples could not "participate,"[80] the question arises: "How did the first Christians arrive at the knowledge that Jesus was risen, not simply that he would rise at the end of time?" What happened between the death of Jesus (or the scattering of the disciples) and the proclamation of the resurrection (or the renewed gathering of the disciples)?[81]

The Hypothesis and Argumentation

As a "first reply" to the question, Schillebeeckx feels bound to answer: What happened to the disciples was a (cognitive) "process of conversion."[82] This, he claims, is the historically demonstrable reality. But it is at the same time (and this is a "second reply" to the question) the historical mediation of "the revelation-grace from God in and through the risen Jesus" which is not historically demonstrable.[83] Through this revelation-grace mediated in a "conversion-experience,"

[77]Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 354. Against this, see above 211-213.

[78]Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, 75.

[79]Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 647, 634, 641-642; cf. Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 183.

[80]Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 380; idem, *Interim Report*, 77.

[81]Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, 75, 77; cf. idem, *Jesus*, 380-381.

[82]Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 381, 645; idem, *Interim Report*, 76-77.

[83]Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, 76; cf. Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 183.

the disciples attained the Easter faith that Jesus is risen. Schillebeeckx develops this summary answer in detail in the following manner.

Though he insists that belief in the resurrection of Jesus necessarily involved new (faith-motivated) experiences after Jesus' death,[84] Schillebeeckx also affirms a foundation for this belief in the life of Jesus and in the disciples' memory of the historical Jesus. "After the first shock of his dying, the memory of Jesus' life and especially of the last supper must have played a vital role in the process of their conversion to faith in Jesus as the Christ, the one imbued to the full with God's Spirit."[85] One factor was the memory of Jesus' self understanding. Relying on the exegetical studies of K. Berger, G. Nickelsburg and L. Ruppert,[86] Schillebeeckx maintains that at the time of Jesus belief in the martyrdom and vindication of God's eschatological prophet was not only current but also formed Jesus' self understanding.[87] Jesus understood his death "as part and parcel of his mission of tendering salvation" from God, while leaving it as a final prophetic sign for others to interpret.[88] Therefore, the post-Easter understanding of Jesus "is not ... based solely on the disciples' Easter experience; it is his self-understanding that creates the possibility and lays the foundation of the subsequent interpretation by the Christians."[89]

Schillebeeckx also points out that (in view of the historicity of

[84]Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 646.

[85]Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 312.

[86]Klaus Berger, "Zum traditionsgeschichtlichen Hintergrund christologischer Hoheitstitel," *New Testament Studies* 17 (1970-71), 391-425; idem, "Die königlichen Messiastraditionen des neuen Testaments," *New Testament Studies* 20 (1973-74), 1-44; George Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1972); Lothar Ruppert, *Jesus als der leidende Gerechte?* (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1972).

[87]Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 383, 441-449, 475-480, 480ff.

[88]Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 311; cf. 310.

[89]Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 311-312.

God's revelation in Jesus) as long as Jesus was still living on earth, his disciples had not yet come to recognize that "he was in his person of constitutive, all-decisive significance for the dawning of the Kingdom of God." Only the totality of the life of Jesus, up to and including his execution, is God's revelation in Jesus of Nazareth.[90] For the disciples, the violent death of Jesus was a tremendous shock. They abandoned Jesus in his critical hour, i.e., they had not "followed him"—"they fled." This did not imply a total loss of faith, but "a 'being of little faith'."[91] Therein lies the foundation for a new conversion to Jesus. There are reasonable grounds for postulating that "Peter was the first (male) disciple to reach the point of 'conversion' and to resume 'following after Jesus'." On the basis of his conversion, Peter took the initiative in re-assembling the disciples, in constituting them disciples of Christ, as is reflected in Lk. 22:32. At the same time, "Peter's act of conversion is not something detached from that of the Twelve: belief in the resurrection presupposes a process of reciprocal communication among the Twelve."[92]

It is no longer possible to reconstruct the process of repentance and conversion on a historical basis,[93] but Schillebeeckx suggests that Simon Peter—and the Twelve—experienced this whole process as a surprising event of grace from God and Jesus. He points to the New Testament texts which connect the resurrection of Jesus with the gift of forgiveness of sins (Jn. 20:22-23; Lk. 24:47; Mt. 28:19; Acts 26:18; 1 Cor. 15:17-18; Rom. 4:25b) and finds therein an indication that Simon

[90]Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 386-387.

[91]Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 387; cf. 327.

[92]Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 389-390.

[93]Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 387. But in this process many factors play a part: "the productive remembrance of Jesus' basic message of a merciful God, concerned for mankind who does not put any conditions on his love; the supposition that Jesus must be the eschatological prophet; reflection on the fate of the innocent sufferers in the bible and the suffering prophet, and so on" (Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, 77, cf. 82; idem, *Jesus*, 382, 387-388, 391).

Peter—and the Twelve—experienced forgiveness after Jesus' death for their cowardice and lack of faith, i.e., experienced that Jesus renewed for them the offer of salvation. The disciples would have discussed this experience among themselves (a detail which Schillebeeckx perceives to be suggested by the theme of doubt in some later appearance narratives: Mt. 28:17; Lk. 24:11.37-41; Jn. 20:9.25-27).[94]

In this "process of reciprocal communication"[95] and possibly lengthy "process of maturation," a consensus of faith emerged and they came to the "evidence of faith": the Lord lives; *he* renews for us the offer of forgiveness and salvation. "In their experience here and now of 'returning to Jesus' ... they encounter in the present the grace of Jesus' forgiving; in doing so they experience Jesus as the one who is alive. A dead man does not proffer forgiveness.... They all of a sudden 'saw' it."[96] This "seeing" that Jesus lives was also a "recognition" and "acknowledgement" of Jesus in the totality of his life. This is what Schillebeeckx calls the "Easter experience," which could be expressed in a variety of ways: "the crucified One is the coming judge (a Maranatha Christology); the crucified One as miracle-worker is actively present in his disciples; the crucified One is risen." Here occurs the realization of really seeing Jesus at last. The later appearance narratives make explicit what is the basic insight: "Jesus 'makes himself seen' (ὤφθη)."[97]

Therefore, experience of forgiveness in the renewal of their own life, illuminated by their memory of Jesus, was "the matrix in which faith in Jesus as the risen One was brought to birth."[98] Through the experience of Jesus' renewed presence made in this process of conversion, the disciples arrived at the conviction of faith that Jesus

[94]Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 391, cf. 390, 358-359.

[95]Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 390.

[96]Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 391.

[97]Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 387.

[98]Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 391.

had truly risen and was the eschatological prophet that God had vindicated, the Christ.[99]

In *Jesus*, Schillebeeckx explained that "the resurrection was believed in before there was any question of appearances."[100] Later, the Easter experience of conversion and disclosure engendered by revelation-grace was articulated and put into words by means of the classic Jewish "model of a conversion vision" (conversion by way of illumination from above, frequently pictured in a light vision). "In the Christian resurrection vision (the Easter appearances)" the gracious gift of conversion to Jesus *as* the Christ is effected by Jesus himself who discloses himself as the risen Christ—"makes himself seen"—in and through the grace of conversion (= illumination).[101]

Therefore, the whole tradition of appearances is a later means of presenting the conversion of the disciples and their disclosure experience as the fruit of God's grace in and through the risen Jesus.[102]

Consequently, Schillebeeckx distinguished talk of appearances as model of representation, on the one hand, and "what is meant by appearances," on the other hand.[103] What is meant "is no model but a living reality,"[104] the real Easter experience of the disciples. In the accounts of the appearances, the New Testament meant to say two things about this Easter experience: 1) the resurrection faith "is not a mere human invention, but a revelation-grace" of God through the risen Jesus himself; 2) this revelation-grace "is no sudden 'incursion from above', i.e., no hocus pocus, but becomes effective in and

[99]Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 645-646; idem, *Interim Report*, 77-79.

[100]Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 354, cf. 645.

[101]Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 383-384, 386, 390.

[102]Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, 80.

[103]Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, 74ff.

[104]Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 390.

through psychological realities and human experiences."[105] For this reason, Schillebeeckx insists strongly that the resurrection faith is not "pure interpretation" of the earthly life of Jesus, but presupposes "new (faith-motivated) experiences after Jesus' death," centered around the experience of "Jesus' renewed presence and the renewed offer of salvation."[106]

In his *Interim Report on the Books "Jesus" and "Christ,"* Schillebeeckx points out that in *Jesus* he "deliberately kept silent about possible visual elements in the process of conversion or the Easter experience." His intention was "to relieve this visual element of the deep dogmatic significance which some people attach to it, namely of being the foundation of the whole of the Christian faith." An added concern was to avoid giving the impression that the risen Jesus showed himself physically in the (cognitive) process of conversion.[107]

Schillebeeckx now concedes that when the first Christians used "the existing conversion model that is expressed in terms of appearances" in order to express their complex experience, "the constant and stereotyped elements of (the) model need not of themselves belong only to the model; they can also be part of the events which are narrated."[108] He affirms that he would not deny the possible presence of visual elements in what the New Testament calls "appearances of Jesus." "In view of the nature of man in ancient culture ... it does not seem to me at all necessary to deny visual elements in the Easter experience of the first Christians. Easter grace seized their heart and senses, and their senses through heart and spirit."[109] However, this visual element "was not the foundation of Christian belief (in the

[105]Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, 76.

[106]Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 646, cf. 390; idem, *Interim Report*, 79-80.

[107]Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, 82.

[108]Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, 80, cf. 147, n. 43.

[109]Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, 80-81.

resurrection)" but "merely a medium of the reception and articulation of revelation."[110] Schillebeeckx understands this visual element as "the redundancy-aspect of a cognitive and emotive event."[111] The visionary elements are "concomitant visual phenomena; at most they are an emotional sign of what really overwhelmed the disciples: the experience of Jesus' new (spiritual) saving presence in the midst of his own people on earth."[112]

Schillebeeckx rejects modern attempts to make the Christ-appearances intelligible by explaining them as "a sort of condensation of various pneumatic experiences within the primitive local congregations." This explanation presupposes what has to be explained, namely "the existence of the 'gathered congregation'," whereas the reality meant by the New Testament appearance traditions marks the starting point for the reassembling of the disciples, "in other words the very earliest event constitutive of the Church."[113]

But H. Kessler points out that now and then Schillebeeckx formulates statements which come close to the rejected position. For example, the nucleus of the Easter conversion-process is "the experience of the new (spiritual) presence of the risen Jesus in the gathered community," or "the Easter experience lies in the experience of an event: namely the reassembling of the disciples ... in the power of the risen Christ himself: 'Where two or three are gathered together in his name, Jesus is in the midst of them'; this New Testament text is ... perhaps the purest, most adequate reflection of the Easter experience."[114]

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[110]Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, 148, n. 46, 147, n. 43.

[111]Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, 147, n. 43.

[112]Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, 81, cf. 78.

[113]Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 382.

[114]The quotations are from Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, 80 and Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 646.

Kessler discovers the foundation of this vacillation in an insufficient distinction between original (community grounding) Easter experience of the first disciples and later (already presupposing community) coming-to-faith of the disciples "of second hand" (Kierkegaard). Behind this stands the concern to "generalize"[115] the structure of the original Easter experience in order to mediate and make it more plausible to present-day contemporaries. "For Schillebeeckx there is no essential distinction between the way in which the first disciples in the beginning came to faith in the risen Jesus, and the way in which we do so."[116] We too can make a faith-motivated experience of renewal of life effected by Jesus in which the certitude of faith is given that Jesus lives.[117] Kessler suggests that it was this interest in generalizing the original Easter experience of the first disciples which also caused Schillebeeckx to assume "that in the origin of the Easter faith, extraordinary, unrepeatable experiences and occurrences could not have played a triggering role."[118]

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[115]Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 647.

[116]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 186. The only special aspect of the first disciples' Easter experience mentioned by Schillebeeckx is the fact that they had known Jesus before his death, "a circumstance which gave them a unique privilege" (Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 647). G. O'Collins warns that one should be clear about the theological implications of Schillebeeckx's position. "Once the special nature of the Easter appearances gets left behind, the apostolic witnesses cease to be normative interpreters of the risen Jesus and authoritative founders of the Christian Church. It is difficult to see why their experience of him should remain a lasting criterion for believers and why their conversion should be the norm for Christian conversion. Schillebeeckx himself seems to draw this conclusion by remarking that it is only 'for the knowledge (but not for any normative interpretation?) of Jesus in whom we believe' that we depend on these witnesses. They 'have no (other) advantage over us than that they were there at the time' (Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, 7)" (G. O'Collins, *Jesus Risen* [New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1987], 117).

[117]Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 346, 647.

[118]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 186.

CRITIQUE

H. Kessler agrees that Schillebeeckx's fundamental concern, to take seriously the human-historical mediatedness of the "appearances" of the risen Jesus, is justified. But the question remains whether Schillebeeckx has succeeded in the execution of this concern. Three decisive points call for comment.[119]

1. A Process of Conversion? R. E. Brown observed that "No major arguments are needed to refute Schillebeeckx's reconstruction of the genesis of the post-resurrection appearances, for it is an imaginative thesis that has no *prima facie* support in the resurrection accounts themselves."[120] In point of fact, the New Testament does *not* portray the original Easter experience as a process of conversion. In 1979, Schillebeeckx himself had to concede that "outside the stories about Paul's conversion in Acts, no conversion terminology can be found."[121] What about these stories of Paul's conversion in the Acts of the Apostles?

Schillebeeckx bases his interpretation of the appearance stories in the gospels on the conversion stories in the three-fold presentation of Paul's Damascus experience in the Acts of the Apostles. There, he claims, a conversion event (Acts 9 and 22) has been transformed into an almost exclusive mission event (Acts 26). Schillebeeckx uses this as a model for postulating a similar development in the narratives of appearances to Peter and the Twelve. In the process of development from conversion appearance narratives to explicit mission appearances, an original conversion event was forced into the background.[122]

Against this, it has been objected that Schillebeeckx is

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[119]Cf. Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 186-191.

[120]Raymond E. Brown, Review of *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* in *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 42 (1980), 422-423.

[121]Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, 83.

[122]Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, 83; also idem, *Jesus*, 381.

"methodologically wrong" in basing so much on the conversion stories in the book of Acts for the interpretation of the appearance narratives. "These are not primary materials for the interpretation of Paul's Damascus road experience, but largely the product of Lukan theology."[123] To conclude from this later interpretative presentation in the Acts of the Apostles, that the Damascus experience was a purely cognitive, interior conversion process, and then to extend this conclusion to the first Easter experiences of the original witnesses, is to turn the development of the tradition upside down.[124] H. Kessler points out that neither the early pre-Pauline tradition (which Schillebeeckx nowhere analyzes in detail), nor Paul in his personal testimony, nor the appearance narratives of the gospels corroborate the development postulated by Schillebeeckx. On the contrary, the fact that the latter, unlike Acts 9 and 22, are not presented according to the model of the vision of light (which was familiar to the hellenistic communities) is an argument for their fidelity to the origin.[125]

Furthermore, supposing but not conceding[126] that there was a conversion model, as Schillebeeckx claims, "its influence would seem

[123]Fuller, "The Easter Event," 33. Also cf. Kremer, "Entstehung und Inhalt," 5.

[124]Cf. Goppelt, *Theology*, 240-241 for the tradition-history analysis of the appearance stories.

[125]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 187.

[126]Fuller comments that both bibliography and footnotes are somewhat meager for Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 380-385. It is not clear what exegete (or exegetes) gave Schillebeeckx the idea of the existence of a conversion model. But A. E. Harvey affirms that Schillebeeckx is following Klaus Berger, who made heavy use of the romance *Joseph and Asenath* (written in Greek in Egypt in the Roman period) to establish an existing Jewish "conversion model." "But it must never be forgotten, first, that there is virtually no other evidence for this model anywhere in Jewish literature, and secondly, that *Joseph and Asenath* itself ... represents an exceedingly exotic kind of Judaism and cannot be relied on to preserve standard Jewish material which would have influenced Christians. The existence of this 'conversion model' ... must remain highly problematic" (A.E. Harvey, Review of *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* in *Journal of Theological Studies* 31 [1980], 604).

to have entered only at a comparatively late stage of the development of the tradition with the author of Luke-Acts." The reason is that before that stage, "the conversion or forgiveness element is a secondary effect of the Easter experiences, not their constitutive element,"[127] as will be seen in the following point.

2. What is the Primary Element in the Easter Experience? Schillebeeckx answers: the experience of forgiveness or of the renewed offer of salvation, and he points to the connection of resurrection and forgiveness of sins in Jn. 20:22-23; Lk. 24:47; Mt. 28:19; Acts 26:18; 1 Cor. 15:17-18; Rom. 4:25b. But H. Kessler replies that if these texts are examined more closely, two things become clear. First, they nowhere affirm that the first disciples had a new experience of forgiveness after Good Friday. They affirm that the disciples were sent by the risen Jesus to preach the resurrection of Jesus and the forgiveness of sins (through Jesus' death and resurrection). Second, all these texts are the products of theological reflection and explicitate the meaning of the resurrection of Jesus according to one of its aspects. This implies that the original Easter experience was also an experience of forgiveness. "However, not this is its primary aspect, but rather the self-manifestation and new presence of the risen Jesus that was given to the disciples." This was experienced first and was not a secondary inference (from a primary experience of forgiveness and conversion).[128]

3. Appearances as Literary Form of Presentation? Contrary to Schillebeeckx's hypothesis that appearances are a later means of presenting the Easter conversion and disclosure experience of the disciples, the tradition-history analysis shows that appearances were spoken of very early in concise formulas without any narrative illustration. As we saw, Paul used the word ὤφθη ("he appeared") with reference to his own Damascus experience. "He was not articulating

[127]Fuller, "The Easter Event," 34.

[128]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 189; cf. Fuller, "The Easter Event," 31.

some other experience which lay behind the expression. We cannot get back behind the statement 'he appeared' to something more primary."[129] As has been shown previously, ὤφθη ("he appeared") expresses an original encounter with the risen Jesus who makes himself perceptibly present from out of the sphere of God. H. Kessler objects that Schillebeeckx has suppressed the early statements in favor of the later Easter stories which he calls "appearance reports" and has not sufficiently evaluated them. "This procedure betrays, on the one hand, a deficient consideration of the tradition-history; on the other hand, allows the suspicion to arise that here also a systematic (dogmatic) prejudice is at work."[130]

Kessler sees this prejudice surfacing in Schillebeeckx's later self-correction. Schillebeeckx had to concede to his exegetical critics that in the New Testament there is talk very early of "seeing" (appearances), and he grants, in addition, that this use of the model of appearances "need not be a pure model; it can also imply a historical event."[131] But the further argument is revealing: "In view of the mentality of man in ancient culture ... *it does not seem to me at all necessary to deny* visual elements in the Easter experience of the first Christians. The Easter grace seized their heart and senses, and their senses through heart and spirit.... But it is not a question of these concomitant visual phenomena."[132] They form the visual "redundancy-element" of the fundamentally cognitive Easter experience of conversion.[133] Kessler finds this argumentation revealing because of its formal structure: "If we could not understand

[129]Fuller, "The Easter Event," 31: "Schillebeeckx takes the statement 'he appeared' as originating not in primary witness but in subsequent theological reflection on a prior experience of conversion/forgiveness." Cf. Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 380-385.

[130]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 190.

[131]Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, 147, n. 43, cf. 80.

[132]Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, 80-81.

[133]Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report*, 75, 80.

this visual element as a purely time-conditioned, for us redundant accompaniment, would we have to deny them as historically factual? Because what is not permitted to be, cannot be? Here also the systematic-dogmatic premises appear to determine what is (this time not demanded, but if need be) allowed as historical facticity."[134]

Conclusion to Critique. Schillebeeckx's explanation of the origin of the Easter faith is not supported by the New Testament texts and does not do justice to their tradition history. "It is based on a partially untenable exegesis and on quite a few conjectures; these again appear to spring from definite systematic preliminary decisions which are thoroughly questionable."[135]

III. THE ENIGMATIC MODE OF THE EASTER EXPERIENCE

According to the credible witness of the early traditions of the New Testament, the Easter faith of the disciples had its origin in a radically new divine initiative coming from outside themselves: in the manifestation by God of the crucified Jesus as the risen One, or as the self-manifestation of the risen One from out of the sphere of God. "This has the character of an *encounter* (ab extra), of an encounter that *befell* the disciples."[136] This surprising self-manifestation of the risen Jesus from out of hiddenness with God in the historical experience of the disciples is the decisive reality which comes to expression in the

[134]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 190-191.

[135]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 191. G. O'Collins explains: "It seems that Schillebeeckx is uneasy about two things: empirical grounds of faith, and a God who may also intervene in such a strikingly special way as through appearances of the risen Christ.... I strongly suspect that certain prior theological convictions control his interpretation of the New Testament texts which report the Easter appearances" (Gerald O'Collins, *Interpreting Jesus* [London: G. Chapman, 1983], 124).

[136]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 216.

word ὤφθη ("he appeared") or in talk of "appearances." This self-revelation of the risen One was the new impulse from outside which formed the objective foundation of the Easter faith of the disciples.

The question concerning the more detailed explanation of the nature of the Easter revelation-encounter experienced by the first disciples is not easy to answer, for the New Testament witness is "in no way interested in the *psychological* process and the act of 'perception' of the appearances."[137] In contradistinction to modern thinking which tends to proceed from the question concerning the perceiving subject, the interest of the New Testament presentation of the appearances focuses on the "object" which became manifest, or more accurately on the "one encountering" (the risen Jesus who came to them).[138]

In 1975, A. Vögtle concluded that the early as well as the later New Testament statements concerning appearances (1 Cor. 15:3-8; Gal. 1:12.15-16; 1 Cor. 9:1) make possible "no reconstructable representation" concerning the concrete mode and manner in which the original Easter experiences, attested as appearances or revelations, took place.[139]

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[137]Lehmann, "Zur Frage," 308.

[138]Lehmann, "Zur Frage," 307.

[139]Vögtle in Vögtle and Pesch, *Osterglauben*, 68, cf. 56-57, 59. Vögtle concludes: "As founded as the thesis may be that the Easter faith of the disciples rests 'on an occurrence ... which cannot be explained from the disciples, but which itself first allows their faith to arise': that 'occurrence' remains for us an unknown which debars us from a corresponding insightful explanation how that 'occurrence' led to the articulation of the Easter faith" (Vögtle in Vögtle and Pesch, *Osterglauben*, 129). Kessler judges that "with this view Vögtle remains in the right against Kolping, who thinks he is able to reconstruct the 'possible details (*Hergang*) of an appearance of the risen One' (Adolf Kolping, *Fundamentaltheologie*, Bd. III/1 [Münster: Regensberg, 1968], 650-659)" (Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 230, n. 267). In 1976, J. Kremer observed that "today most exegetes tend to interpret the appearances as real, but yet unique experiences of the disciples, which cannot be adequately defined" (Kremer, "Entstehung und Inhalt," 3).

1. The ὤφθη of the pre-Pauline formula in 1 Cor. 15:3b-5.7 (which has as its background, not prophetic or apocalyptic visions, but the appearance-of-God formula of the Septuagint, and therefore the manifestation of the salvific presence of God in patriarchal and eschatological times) signifies the (self-) manifestation of the risen One in and through an experience which contains the moment of making visible and being seen (although not necessarily with the external bodily eyes); concerning word revelation, nothing is explicitly said.[140] A. Kolping concludes from this: "The original act of appearance was wordless."[141] But Kessler objects that this conclusion to an originally "wordless appearance or mere seeing"[142] is precipitate and unfounded. "From the silence in relation to words, speaking, hearing (audition), it is not permitted to conclude without further ado to their absence." His reason is that in biblical language, the functions of seeing and hearing are not separated in ways that exclude one another (Is. 1:1, 2:1, 13:1; Am. 1:1; Hab. 1:1, etc. can, for example, speak of a "seeing" of the *words* of revelation). The point is that the evidence of perception given in the pre-Pauline formula could precede the distinction between seeing and hearing. But "that notwithstanding, the statement remains valid that from the ὤφθη no conclusions may be drawn concerning the specific nature of the appearances of the risen One; nothing is expressed concerning the how."[143]

2. In Gal. 1:12.15-16, Paul uses terminology "which has noticeable parallels in the gospel tradition" and may possibly go back to the

[140]See above 211-216, as well as Vögtle in Vögtle and Pesch, *Osterglauben*, 40-59; Hoffmann, "Auferstehung Jesu Christi," 492; Schmitt, "Resurrection de Jésus," 543; Johannes Lindblom, *Gesichte und Offenbarungen* (Lund: Gleerup, 1968), 86-89, against Michaelis, "ὁράω," 358-359.

[141]Kolping, *Fundamentaltheologie*, Bd. III/1, 652 (all translations from this source are the author's own).

[142]Kolping, *Fundamentaltheologie*, Bd. III/1, 654.

[143]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 231. Cf. Vögtle in Vögtle and Pesch, *Osterglauben*, 69.

primitive community.[144] He affirms that God unveiled or revealed (ἀποκαλύπτειν - *galah*) his Son (Jesus Christ). In the Hebrew Old Testament, *galah* can "designate God's showing himself or revealing himself in a word or in an action...."[145] More specifically, *galah* can designate the prophetic reception of the word of God (1 Sam. 3:7.21, 9:15; Am. 3:7; Dan. 10:1), occasionally also the vision of God (Num. 24:4.16; the seer Balaam), or the vision of his end-time mysteries (Dan. 2:19.28-30), once an appearance of God (the theophany referred to in Gen. 35:7), and also God's activity in history (Is. 40:5, 53:1).[146] This variety of meanings continues in the Septuagint, which predominantly translates *galah* as ἀποκαλύπτειν and in the apocalyptic literature (compare, for instance, Dan. 10:1 with 2:19.22 or 1QH 1:21) and right into the New Testament (Rom. 1:16-17; 2 Cor. 12:1.7; Mt. 11:25, 16:17). From this variety in the use of *galah* and ἀποκαλύπτειν, Kessler concludes that in Gal. 1:12.15-16, the visionary element, the seeing, is not necessarily included.[147] The text gives us no information concerning the concrete manner in which the revelation occurred.[148] We only know that the crucified Jesus was revealed to Paul as the risen

[144]Kremer, "Auferstehung Jesu Christi," 185.

[145]Claus Westermann - Rainer Albertz, "glh: aufdecken," in *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament* I, eds. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1971), 425 (author's own translation), quoted in Mussner, *Der Galaterbrief*, 67, n. 119.

[146]Hans-Jürgen Zobel, "galah," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* II, eds. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmar Ringgren (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1977), 481-487.

[147]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 232, against Hoffmann, who thinks that the formulation in Gal. 1 depends on apocalyptic terminology and consequently supposes that the Easter-revelation occurred "in a way analogous to the apocalyptic vision" (Kremer, "Auferstehung Jesu Christi," 496).

[148]Vögtle in Vögtle and Pesch, *Osterglauben*, 68.

and exalted Christ, "and in this revelation Paul received the gospel (to be explicitated and proclaimed in words)."[149]

3. Many texts make use of explicit verbs of "seeing" to designate the Easter experience. This is encountered for the first and only time with Paul in 1 Cor. 9:1 (ἑώρακα; occasioned, as observed previously, by recourse to the language of the prophetic call visions, for instance Is. 6:1.5). Subsequently, verbs of "seeing" are found in the tomb-narratives and appearance-narratives of the gospels: Mk. 16:17; Mt. 28:7 (ὄψεσθε as promise); Mt. 28:17 and Jn. 20:20.29 (ἰδόντες); Lk. 24:39 (ἴδετε); Jn. 20:18.25.29 (ἑώρακα). "They obviously designate a visual perception, but the manner of the seeing—whether with external or inner eyes, etc.—is not specified."[150] Kessler points out that in the Easter texts this seeing is hardly emphasized as such. He also observes that the risen One who gives himself to be seen also expressly addresses the disciples (except in 1 Cor. 9:1) and speaks words which bear the stamp of later theological, ecclesiological, apologetic and missionary development.[151] He suggests that if, with John Alsup and Leonhard Goppelt, one may understand the gospel appearance narratives in the light of the anthropomorphic theophany narratives of the Old Testament (cf. Gen. 18:1-33; Ex. 3:2-10; Jgs. 6:11-21; 1 Sam. 3:1-14; cf. Tb. 5:4-8, 12:11-21; 4 Ezr. 14:1-5)[152] whose form and way of speaking they adopt, "then they want to report neither external-physical nor visionary experiences, but to attest the new, definitive turning of

[149]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 232.

[150]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 232. "What, for instance, does Isaiah, to whom Paul alludes, 'see' in his call vision 'with his eyes' (Is. 6:5) of Yahweh sitting on his exalted throne, when Yahweh's *train* fills the whole temple in which Isaiah is (Is. 6:1)!" (Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 232-233).

[151]Cf. Vögtle in Vögtle and Pesch, *Osterglauben*, 55-56.

[152]John Alsup, *The Post-Resurrection Appearance Stories of the Gospel-Tradition* (London: SPCK, 1975), 239-247; Goppelt, *Theology*, 240-245.

God to men in the risen Jesus, i.e., they treat of a new revelation."[153] Concerning the appearance narratives, H. Schlier concluded "that the 'seeing', as much as it means the perception of the one showing himself, is completely burst open in its concept. 'Seeing' goes in the direction of 'experience'."[154] As a positive formulation concerning the appearances, X. Leon-Dufour proposes: "The spiritual experience of the disciples, not purely subjective ... communicated through the medium of contemporary language and their religious tradition...."[155]

Karl Rahner suggests that so far as the nature of the experience of the original witnesses is accessible to us, it is to be conceived

> after the manner of our experience of the powerful Spirit of the living Lord, rather than in any way which either likens this experience too closely to mystical visions of an imaginative kind in later times, or understands it as an almost physical sense experience. There is no such sense experience of someone who has really reached fulfillment, even presupposing that he must indeed have freely 'manifested' himself.[156]

CONCLUSIONS

From the New Testament data, the following conclusions may be drawn:[157]

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[153]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 233.

[154]Heinrich Schlier, *Über die Auferstehung Jesu Christi* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1968), 36 (hereafter cited as *Über die Auferstehung*), author's own translation. In reference to the idea of sight/appearance in Paul's description of the risen Jesus, R. E. Brown concludes: "Our language of space-time experience breaks down when it is used to describe the eschatological" (Raymond E. Brown, *The Virginal Conception and Bodily Resurrection of Jesus* [New York: Paulist Press, 1973], 91).

[155]Leon-Dufour, *Resurrection*, 216.

[156]Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith* (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), 276. Rahner affirms that the experience of the original witnesses was "strictly *sui generis*" (Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 277).

[157]Cf. Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 233-236.

1. It is not possible for us to concretize the "how" of the original experiences attested as revelations or appearances, since the texts "simply give us no information about that." Their interest is concentrated on the "decisive 'that' of the encounter with and self-manifestation (appearance, self-revelation) of the risen crucified One." All attempts to get behind this "overpowering 'that' and 'what' of the Easter revelation" possess the character of "subjective surmises conditioned by the spirit of the age" and, in any case, overstep the limits of what is historically and theologically knowable.[158]

2. However, the *that* and *what* of the Easter experience stand out all the more sharply. The enigmatic "something" postulated by the historian is the "experience of the encounter with and the self-manifestation of the risen One himself." This is the source of both "the knowledge of his resurrection and the radical change in the lives of the disciples (new existence in faith, mission community)."[159] As A. Vögtle accurately formulated it:

> The reception of a revelatory impulse claimed by the tradition can in principle ... count as fully sufficient explanation for the fact that the disciples again came to Jerusalem and affirmed here an intervening action of God on the crucified One, namely his resurrection and exaltation to heaven. That may be held fast with a good conscience, although the sources at our disposal do not enable us to grasp the revelation event grounding the Easter faith in its concrete how.[160]

3. The concepts of *encounter* and *self-manifestation* in encounter, used in (1) and (2) to interpret the Easter appearances of the risen One, are qualified to include "both the primary and constitutive, central element of non-derivability and irreducibility as well as the secondary and non-negotiable element of the profound positive transformation of those affected by the encounter."[161] H. Schlier coined the word

[158]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 234.

[159]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 235.

[160]Vögtle, "Jesus 'Christus'," 73.

[161]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 235.

Begegnis to express the communion-creating encounter proceeding from the initiative of the risen Lord.[162]

4. Kessler concedes that the encounter with the risen crucified One affirmed by the original witnesses cannot be directly verified. But he affirms the possibility of historically examining the surrounding field of this affirmation: "what preceded it and, above all, the profound effects of the affirmed encounters in the conduct and subsequent lives of the disciples." Consequently, a certain empirical-historical control is possible and the credibility of the disciples' testimony can be illuminated and become a summons to faith. "Such a decision of faith is in no way arbitrary, but has its solid reasons."[163] Now, as before, the appearances of the risen Jesus, attested by the disciples and Paul, provide the most credible explanation of how the Easter faith arose.[164]

[162]Schlier, *Über die Auferstehung*, 38.

[163]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 235-236.

[164]Kremer, "Auferstehung Jesu Christi," 193.

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CHRISTIANITY AND WORLD RELIGIONS:
PAUL KNITTER'S PLURALISTIC PERSPECTIVE

Joseph J. Smith, S.J.

The fact of the plurality of religions has always been known. In the fifteenth century, it caused Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa to compose a dialogue in which representatives of various religions explain their different positions in an effort to attain common agreement. But only in modern times has the diversity of religions impressed itself so vividly on the consciousness of large numbers of Christians that they hesitate to assign universal and normative value to their own faith. The modern means of communication have already created the beginnings of a global consciousness. It is impossible for Christians to ignore the existence of other flourishing world religions which are the spiritual homes of hundreds of millions of believers.

Though Christianity is larger than any other single religion, it is far from comprising a majority of the world population. Today, after almost two thousand years of missionary labors, Christians number only about one-third of the world population, and because of the rapid population increase in non-Christian parts of the world, the total ratio of Christians is actually decreasing.[1] Not only have

[1]If present demographic trends continue, some experts have predicted that by the year 2000, Christians will number only about one-sixth of the world

centuries of missionary zeal been unable to remove the reality of religious pluralism, but today, Christians witness the resurgence of missionary dynamism among the other religions. "Hindus, Buddhists and Moslems are claiming that their message, like that of Christianity, bears a 'universal relevance'."[2]

Karl Rahner has conceded that this fact of the persistent pluralism of religions which endures after a two thousand year history of Christian mission "must be the greatest scandal and the greatest vexation for Christianity," for today, Christians experience the world religions—no longer theoretically but existentially and in the concrete—as realities which place the absolute claim of their own Christian faith in question. "Hence the question about the understanding of and the continuing existence of religious pluralism as a factor of our immediate Christian existence is an urgent one."[3]

Christian theologians have proposed many different explanations of the relation between Christianity and the world religions:

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population. Cf. Walbert Bühlmann, *The Coming of the Third Church* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1977), 143. David Barrett, in his *World Christian Encyclopedia* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982), is much more optimistic. He estimates the Christian percentage of the world population in 1980 to be 32.8 percent. He claims that during the twentieth century, "Christianity has surged ahead in the world's less developed countries from 83 million in 1900 to 643 million by 1980." Barrett contends that this surge will continue and predicts that by the year 2000, Christians will make up 32.3 percent of the world population (3-4). However, he does admit the "gradual numerical decline (of the number of Christians) when expressed as percentages of the world population" (5): from 34.4 percent in 1900 to 32.8 percent in 1980 to 32.3 percent in 2000.

[2]Paul Knitter, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1985), 4 (hereafter cited as *No Other Name?*).

[3]Karl Rahner, "Christianity and Non-Christian Religions," in Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations* V (Baltimore: Helicon, 1966), 116-117 (hereafter cited as "Christianity and Non-Christian Religions").

EXTREME EXCLUSIVISM

At one end of the spectrum lies the most negative view, still found in some types of sectarian Protestantism. This extreme Exclusivism regards all non-Christian religions as "false, diabolical and idolatrous." In this view, "there is no truth, no genuine relation to God to be found outside of the Christian faith" and explicit personal knowledge of and commitment to Jesus as the Christ.[4]

MODERATE EXCLUSIVISM: A PROTESTANT VERSION

A more moderate form of Exclusivism, characteristic of mainline Protestantism, is based on the idea of a dialectic between a general or universal divine revelation and human sin.[5] In this explanation, God reveals himself universally in the created world and in man created in God's image but man immediately distorts this revelation into human illusion by his sin. Man, therefore, knows enough about God from the revelation in creation to make him guilty and responsible for his sin. But because it is a knowledge corrupted by sin, it cannot become a true knowledge of God, nor can it save man from his sin.[6]

All empirical religion, then, is the product of revelation and sin closely interwoven in a dialectical unity. Emil Brunner concludes that in all religion there is

> a recollection of the divine truth which has been lost ... a longing for the divine Light and the divine Love; but in all religion also there yawns

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[4]Respectively, Avery Dulles, *The Catholicity of the Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 60 (hereafter cited as *Catholicity*); John Macquarrie, "Commitment and Openness: Christianity's Relation to Other Faiths," *Theology Digest* 27 (1979), 349.

[5]This approach finds its classic expression in Emil Brunner.

[6]Joseph J. Smith, *Emil Brunner's Theology of Revelation* (Manila: Loyola House of Studies, 1967), 28-31.

> an abyss of demonic distortion of the truth and of man's effort to escape from God.... Even in his worship of God, man seeks himself, his own salvation; even in his surrender to the Deity, he wants to find his own security.[7]

The attitude toward other religions which follows from this interpretation is a dialectical Yes-No. The Christian can say Yes to the "impressive," "sublime" and "divinely true" elements in religions which originate in the general revelation. But the Christian must also say No to the "terrible," "repellent" and "demoniacally false" elements that result from sin.[8] The revelation in Jesus Christ is "both the fulfillment of all religion and the judgement of all religion." He is the fulfillment of the truth religions see dimly and seek in vain.

> From the standpoint of Jesus Christ the non-Christian religions seem like stammering words from some half-forgotten saying; none of them is without a breath of the Holy, and none of them is without its impressive truth and yet none of them is the truth; for their truth is Jesus Christ.[9]

He is also the judgement on their sinful distortions and attempts at self-redemption. "Viewed in his light all religious systems appear untrue, unbelieving and indeed godless."[10] "For 'religion' is the product of man's sinful blindness."[11] Through Jesus Christ, Christianity alone has *saving* revelation, "the self-communication of the holy and merciful God."[12]

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[7]Emil Brunner, *Revelation and Reason* (London: SCM Press, 1947), 265-266.

[8]Brunner, *Revelation and Reason*, 265-266.

[9]Brunner, *Revelation and Reason*, 270.

[10]Brunner, *Revelation and Reason*, 270.

[11]Brunner, *Revelation and Reason*, 265.

[12]Brunner, *Revelation and Reason*, 271. This dialectical exclusivist interpretation has been developed and deepened by Hendrik Kraemer in his *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1938) and *Religion and the Christian Faith* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1956). Cf. Gavin D'Costa,

MODERATE EXCLUSIVISM: A CATHOLIC VERSION

"A central position, favored by many contemporary Catholics, is that these religions are human creations, admirable in their own way, but reaching out in vain towards a transcendence they cannot achieve."[13] "In this perspective religions are a movement of man toward God,"[14] the expression of man's groping quest for God, "creations of human genius," which mingle elements of truth and elements of error,[15] "human efforts to attain the divine through an ecstatic leap that never, in fact, achieves its objective."[16]

In their quest for God, the religions attain seeds of truth. "They are touching and often very beautiful attempts rising very high in their search for God."[17] "They are not so much false as essentially incomplete, unfinished" and awaiting fulfillment.[18] Henri de Lubac affirms that "esteem and admiration are not ruled out for the efforts to search and create made by the natural religions and spiritualities we read about." He refers to the loftiness of the Buddhist ideal; the concern of the hearers to detach themselves from the passions and the perishable

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Theology and Religious Pluralism (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 52-79 (hereafter cited as *Theology and Religious Pluralism*).

[13]Dulles, *Catholicity*, 60.

[14]Jean Danielou, "Christianity and non-Christian Religions," in *The Word in History*, ed. Thomas P. Burke (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1966), 91 (hereafter cited as "Christianity").

[15]Jean Danielou, *Mythes païens, mystère chrétien* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1966), 72 (author's own translation); cf. 8-9, 22, 33.

[16]Dulles, *Catholicity*, 63, referring to Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Pneuma und Institution* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1974), 83-87.

[17]Jean Danielou, *The Salvation of the Nations* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1949), 8.

[18]Jean Danielou, *Advent* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1951), 16.

world. He quotes approvingly Pope Paul VI's Easter Message of 1964: "Each religion bears traces of light which must not be disdained or quenched; every religion raises us towards the transcendence of the Being without which there is no reason for existence, for thinking, for responsible work, for hope without illusion. Every religion is a dawning of faith and we await the full daybreak."[19]

But though in the religions humanity can be raised to certain spiritual heights, "the topmost summit is never reached." A critical examination of the objective forms of non-Christian religions "shows that there is some essential factor missing from every religious 'invention' that is not a following of Christ.... Outside Christianity nothing attains its end toward which unknowingly, all human desires, all human endeavors are in movement: the embrace of God in Christ."[20] Accordingly, the seeds of truth contained in other religions remain "distorted until integrated into the fullness of Christ."[21]

According to the Fathers, the Church of Christ is called by her faith in Christ "to integrate [by converting] all the religious efforts of mankind." This integration involves two interdependent elements: on the one hand, "an element of purification, battle even, and elimination, since everything is at first mixed with error or evil to a greater or lesser degree; on the other hand, an element of assumption, assimilation and transfiguration."[22] In Christianity, the descent of God in Christ and the Spirit makes present "an absolutely new and different reality which

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[19]Henri de Lubac, *The Church: Paradox and Mystery* (New York: Alba House, 1969), 92 (hereafter cited as *The Church*).

[20]Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism* (London: Burns, Oates & Washburn, 1950), 111-112.

[21]Dulles, *Catholicity*, 63, summarizing Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Die Absolutheit des Christentums und die Katholizität der Kirche," in *Absolutheit des Christentums*, ed. Walter Kasper (Freiburg: Herder, 1977), 152-153.

[22]Henri de Lubac, *Paradoxe et Mystère de L'Eglise* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1967), 130 (author's own translation). Cf. Danielou, "Christianity," 92-96.

only consummates and completes the efforts of man because it first of all submits them to a transformation."[23]

According to this interpretation, Christianity is the only way of salvation constituted by God. The other religions are not ways of salvation "divinely legitimated *in themselves* and *as such.*"[24] There is one redemption and one revelation and their communication has been entrusted to the Church. Of course, the grace of Christ is active outside the visible Church and non-Christians can respond in faith to the hidden inspiration of the Spirit of Christ. De Lubac concedes that such men are "anonymous Christians" insofar as they have unknowingly accepted the grace of Christ. But there is no "anonymous Christianity" or "Church unaware of itself" in the self-created religions of humanity. This would suppose "that there is in practice no difference between religions, that they may all equally play the role of 'means' or 'ways of salvation'."[25]

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[23]Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Trois signes du christianisme," appendix to *Theologie de l'histoire* (Paris: Desclee de Brouwer, 1955), 167 (author's own translation), quoted in Henri de Lubac, *The Church*, 81.

[24]Yves Congar, "Non Christian Religions and Christianity," in *Service and Salvation: Nagpur Theological Conference on Evangelization*, ed. Joseph Pathrapankal (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1973), 175.

[25]Henri de Lubac, *The Church*, 86-88. H. Urs von Balthasar applauds the distinction made by H. de Lubac between "anonymous Christians" and "anonymous Christianity." "This enlightening distinction seems to me to satisfy all the present needs; the certainty, on the one hand, that the Christian preacher does not enter a domain devoid of grace—since Christ died for everyone—and the urgent need, on the other, to testify by his whole existence to the unique grace that God bestowed on us in His Son" (Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Cordula ou l'épreuve décisive* [Paris: Beauchesne, 1968], 122 [author's own translation]). Y. Congar concedes the reality intended by the term "anonymous Christians," i.e., "the condition of men not evangelized and yet justified by the grace of Christ." But he claims that the expression "anonymous *Christians*" is not a happy one, "for 'Christian' implies the profession of the faith proclaimed and received, followed by baptism" (Congar, "Non Christian Religions and Christianity," 168).

The viewpoint of this third position was adopted by Pope Paul VI in the Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization in the Modern World (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 1975). Non-Christian religions are said "to carry within them the echo of thousands of years of searching for God, a quest which is incomplete, but often made with great sincerity and righteousness of heart." They contain "natural religious expressions most worthy of esteem" but it is "the religion of Jesus" which "places man in relation with the plan of God, with his living presence and action" and "causes an encounter with the mystery of divine paternity that bends over toward humanity. In other words, our religion effectively establishes with God an authentic living relationship which the other religions do not succeed in doing, even though they have, as it were, their arms stretched out towards heaven."[26]

INCLUSIVISM: CHRIST WITHIN RELIGIONS

"A more optimistic position, held by many progressive theologians, is that these religions come from an authentic supernatural experience and that they are ordinary means for salvation for those who do not know Christ."[27] This inclusivist approach affirms the salvific presence of God in non-Christian religions while still maintaining that Christ is the definitive and normative revelation of God as well as the one saviour and constitutive cause of salvation. Since Vatican II, a large number of Catholic theologians have adopted this inclusivist position.

Vatican Council II set the framework for the current discussion within Roman Catholic theology by affirming two general principles which stand in tension with one another. First, on the ground that non-Christian religions "often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens

[26]Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Pasay City: St. Paul Publications, 1978), no. 53, 39-40. Cf. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 68 (1976), no. 53, 41-42.

[27]Dulles, *Catholicity*, 60.

all men," the Council stated that "the Catholic Church rejects nothing which is true and holy in these religions" (*Nostra Aetate*, art. 2). But secondly, it affirms that the Church must always proclaim Christ as the one in whom the fullness of religious life is found, and in whom God has reconciled all things (ibid.). "The council left open the question whether the non-Christian religions contain revelation and are, in themselves, salvific."[28]

It has been rightly affirmed that if "Vatican II is a watershed in Christian attitudes towards other religions, Karl Rahner is its chief engineer" and that "the major architect of the post-conciliar Catholic contribution to the subject is undoubtedly Karl Rahner."[29] For Rahner, the foundation of the theological understanding of other religions within Christian faith is the following thesis: "Christianity understands itself as the absolute religion, intended for all men, which cannot recognize any other religion alongside itself as of equal right."[30] This follows from the faith-conviction that it was founded by God himself for all through his saving self-communication and definitive, normative revelation in the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of the Word of God in Jesus Christ and the sending of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ is the constitutive (final) cause of salvation and the definitive, normative revelation of God in the world. The Church is the community of believers effected by the revelatory event of Jesus Christ in which the self-revelation of God in Christ remains permanently present in the world and for the world.

But Christianity had a temporal beginning. In its historically tangible ecclesial-sociological form as the permanent presence of

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[28]Dulles, *Catholicity*, 61; also cf. Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations* XVIII (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 289-291. This is a more accurate interpretation of the Council than that which holds that the conciliar statements "affirm implicitly but clearly that the religions are ways of salvation" (Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 130).

[29]Respectively, Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 125; Alan Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1982), 45.

[30]Rahner, "Christianity and Non-Christian Religions," 118.

God's saving revelation in Christ, "it has not always and everywhere been *the* way of salvation for men." Even after it has been constituted in history as the absolute religion intended in principle for all men, Christianity only makes an existentially real demand on human persons when it has become "a real historical factor in the individual history and culture—a real historical moment in a particular culture."[31] How then was salvation made possible for those who lived before Christ and for those who lived after Christ but who through no fault of their own have not yet been reached by the Christian message in a way which is directly binding on them?

Rahner's answer develops along the following lines: God has a universal salvific will which is sincere and effective.[32] The universal salvific will of God objectifies itself in the self-communication of God which is called grace and which, at least as offer, is given to every person's freedom in all ages and places in history.[33] This universal offer of grace does not occur in a purely interior, mystical fashion but is bestowed

[31]Rahner, "Christianity and Non-Christian Religions," 119.

[32]Karl Rahner, "The One Christ and the Universality of Salvation," in Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations* XVI (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1979), 202-203; idem, "Church, Churches and Religions," in Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations* X (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1973), 33 (hereafter cited as "Church, Churches and Religions"); idem, "Jesus Christ in the Non-Christian Religions," in Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations* XVII (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 40 (hereafter cited as "Jesus Christ in the Non-Christian Religions").

[33]Karl Rahner, "Observations on the Problem of the 'Anonymous Christian'," in Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations* XIV (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1976), 288 (hereafter cited as "Observations on the Problem"). "Not withstanding its supernaturality and unmeritedness, it [this grace] can certainly be seen as a permanent existential of man, of mankind and its history, always and everywhere present, as permanently present possibility of a salvific relationship of freedom to God, as innermost entelechy of the history of the individual and of mankind as a whole, in which the unmerited, gracious self-communication of God to the world is the ultimate finality and dynamism of the world and world history, whether the human freedom of any particular individual accepts this innermost entelechy or closes itself up against it" (Karl Rahner, "On the Importance of the Non-Christian Religions for Salvation," in Rahner, *Theological*

and experienced in and through the concrete historical situations of man's existence in society. Jesus Christ in his incarnation, life, death, and resurrection is the final cause of this universal self-communication of God (at least as offer) to all humanity in the whole of human history. That means that this transcendental self-communication of God in the grace of the Spirit is given precisely in view of the Christ-event which is the goal of salvation history.[34]

This offer of grace to the open spirit of man penetrates to the innermost depths of a person, radically reorientating him toward the immediate presence of God and communicating an inner, conscious non-objective ordination to the God who saves and beatifies, an immediate but non-objective transcendental experience of the nearness of the silent mystery. Rahner calls this transcendental revelation, for "if God's self-communication is free and if it is consciously grasped by a person, even if this occurs without thematic reflection—then the two conditions for supernatural revelation are realized in the strict sense of the term."[35]

Faith, as the acceptance of God's revelation, occurs whenever a person accepts his existence graced by the radical nearness of the absolute mystery and the a-priori awareness this involves.[36] This is a rudimentary, implicit faith in comparison with explicit Christian faith, yet it possesses

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Investigations XVIII, 291 [hereafter cited as "On the Importance of the Non-Christian Religions"]).

[34]Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith* (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), 317 (hereafter cited as *Foundations*); idem, "Church, Churches and Religions," 37-38, 39; Joseph Wong, *Logos-Symbol in the Christology of Karl Rahner* (Rome: Libreria Ateneo Salesiano, 1984), 154.

[35]Karl Rahner, "Anonymous and Explicit Faith," in Rahner, *Theological Investigations* XVI, 57. Cf. idem, "Church, Churches and Religions," 34-35; Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler, "Revelation," in *Concise Theological Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (London: Burns & Oates, 1983), 446-447.

[36]Karl Rahner, "Anonymous Christians," in Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations* VI (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1969), 394. Cf. idem, "Observation on the Problem," 290.

the inherent dynamism "to develop into that faith which is objectified and articulated through the Gospel."[37]

When accepted in faith, God's self-revelation in the depths of the spiritual person automatically tends to objectify and express itself categorically in the concrete history of man, in his words and actions. It will influence the concrete forms of his philosophy and morality—all the dimensions of his thought and action. In its highest form, the transcendental revelation will try to objectify itself in the concrete forms of religion: in religious associations and practices, in liturgical rites, in explicit religious statements, in religious writings, in expressions of morality, in prophetic protests against false interpretations of this grace-filled experience.[38]

Rahner underlines the special role of "prophets" in this interpretation and explicitation of the transcendental revelation. By "prophets" he simply means those persons who played a special role in the origin and development of a religion, whether founders of religions or their reformers or persons who made a special contribution through word and deed, for in the providence of God, the experience of God's self-communication will be more intense in some than in others. Persons who are more open to God and with special presuppositions and gifts of the natural order (e.g., a superior religious sense and powers of expression) will be able to explicitate their experience (under God's providence) in words, rites and symbols and communicate religious truth to other men.

In this way in man's religions there are individual moments of successful categorical mediation of what man perceives by the inner light of faith in fidelity to his inner orientation to God of salvation.

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[37]Rahner, "Observations on the Problem," 291.

[38]Karl Rahner, "History of the World and Salvation History," in Rahner, *Theological Investigations* V, 105. Cf. Rahner, *Foundations*, 173: "The attempt is made in every religion, at least on man's part, to mediate the original, unreflexive and non-objective revelation historically, to make it reflexive and to interpret it in propositions."

Through these means, "God creates for man the possibility of salvation also in the dimension of his ... concrete historicity."[39] Grace must incarnate itself in a social-historical "body" in order to be really available. "For even in his most personal history man always remains a social being, whose innermost decisions are mediated through the specific form of his social and historical life."[40]

Rahner concludes that as a result of their supernatural elements, "the actual religions of 'pre-Christian' humanity" can by all means have a positive meaning in the saving providence of God; they can be "legitimate" religions, though in varying ways and degrees. By "legitimate" religion Rahner means "an institutional religion whose 'use' by man at a certain period can be regarded on the whole as a positive means of gaining the right relationship to God and thus for the attaining of salvation, a means which is, therefore, positively included in God's plan of salvation."[41]

This does not deny the elements of error and depravity contained in the religions, for sin has its distorting effect on all human social productions, including the interpretation of transcendental revelation. "It is only partially successful and is mixed with error, sinful delusions and their objectifications."[42] Consequently, the non-Christian religions are not guaranteed as pure expressions of the mystery (as is the special revelation history in Jesus Christ) but are man's faltering attempts at explicitation—though influenced by the saving providence of God. Nevertheless, "non-Christian religions, even though incomplete, rudimentary and partially debased, can be realities *within* a *positive* history of salvation and revelation." To them "a positive salvific function cannot be *a priori* and entirely denied."[43] Rahner illustrates this with the

[39]Rahner, *Foundations*, 173.

[40]Rahner, "Jesus Christ in the Non-Christian Religions," 42.

[41]Rahner, "Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions," 125.

[42]Rahner, *Foundations*, 173.

[43]Rahner, "On the Importance of the Non-Christian Religions," 294-295.

case of the Old Testament covenant which contained both elements willed by God *and* many elements which were false and corrupt.[44]

If, then, non-Christian religions can be legitimate or lawful religions with a positive salvific function in God's plan of salvation, "Christianity does not simply confront the members of an extra Christian religion as a mere non-Christian but as someone who can and must already be regarded in this or that respect as an anonymous Christian,"[45] for he lives by the grace of God mediated through his religion and all grace in the present order is the grace of Christ. He thus "possesses (even if only in a hidden way) that which essentially constitutes a Christian, namely, the grace of God which is accepted in faith."[46]

So, the anonymous Christian in Rahner's understanding of the term is "the pagan after the beginning of the Christian mission, who lives in the state of Christ's grace through faith, hope and love, yet who has no explicit knowledge of the fact that his life is orientated in grace-given salvation to Jesus Christ."[47] He has accepted "what is essential in what Christianity wants to mediate to him: his salvation in that grace which objectively is the grace of Jesus Christ."[48] In that respect, he is Christian. But because he is not a Christian in the sense of having made a conscious and willed confession of faith, he is an anonymous Christian, that is, "not identifiable as such either in his own eyes or in those of the Church and of Christians."[49]

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[44]Rahner, "On the Importance of the Non-Christian Religions," 292-293; cf. idem, "Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions," 125-127.

[45]Rahner, "Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions," 131.

[46]Rahner, "Observations on the Problem," 292.

[47]Rahner, "Observations on the Problem," 283.

[48]Rahner, *Foundations*, 176.

[49]Bernard Sesboue, "Karl Rahner et les 'chretiens anonymes'," *Etudes* 361 (1984), 527 (author's own translation). In response to H. de Lubac's denial of "anonymous Christianity" or "Church unaware of itself," Rahner points out that "Christianity" can have two meanings. Beside the meaning "Christendom," i.e.,

However, the presence of anonymous Christianity does not make the mission of the Church superfluous. Grace of its very nature has an incarnational dynamism which presses toward its full realization and reflexive self-awareness in explicit Christianity.[50]

All this has consequences for the Church's understanding of itself. The Church is not the privileged community of those who are saved surrounded by the *massa damnata* of non-Christian humanity. It is the "historically tangible vanguard and the historically and socially constituted explicit expression of what the Christian hopes is present as a hidden reality even outside the visible Church,"[51] for the Church is the sacrament of salvation for the world. It is the concrete historical manifestation and effective sacramental sign of the saving grace of Jesus Christ "which takes effect far beyond the confines of the 'visible' Church as sociologically definable."[52] But this grace of Christ and the anonymous Christianity it effects possess an objective and existential tendency to "seek historical and social embodiment in membership in the Church and thus orientate men to the Church so that the salvific

"the sum total of Christians, and so for practical purpose the Church," it can also mean the "being Christian" of the individual Christian. Rahner contends that in this latter sense, it is permitted to speak of anonymous Christianity, if, like de Lubac, one is willing to speak of anonymous Christians (Rahner, "Observations on the Problem," 281). In Rahner's understanding, then, "anonymous Christianity" is "the condition of a man who lives on the one hand in a state of grace and justification, and yet on the other hand has not come into contact with the explicit preaching of the Gospel and is consequently not in a position to call himself a 'Christian'" (Karl Rahner, "Atheism and Implicit Christianity," in Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations* IX [London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1972], 145).

[50]Karl Rahner, "Christianity and the Missionary Task of the Church," in Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations* XII (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1974), 171-177.

[51]Rahner, "Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions," 133.

[52]Karl Rahner, "The New Image of the Church," in Rahner, *Theological Investigations* X, 16, cf. 12-24.

significance of the Church remains preserved also for them (*Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*)."[53]

"In the final analysis, then, the religions are incomplete," but they are a preparation for the gospel and find their fulfillment in Christ and in his Church. "The missionary mandate remains intact and is reinforced."[54]

Rahner's theology of religions embodies the mainline Roman Catholic view and its basic elements are endorsed by theologians such as J. Heislbetz, H. Schlette, G. Thils, E. Schillebeeckx, A. Dulles, E. Hillman, R. McBrien, P. Rossano (although they may not use the terms anonymous Christian and anonymous Christianity).[55] In a statement in his encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*, which a Protestant missiological authority has called "the single most significant doctrinal statement of the Catholic Church for mission theology since Vatican Council II,"[56] Pope John Paul II also reflects the influence of Rahner's theory of "anonymous Christians": "The human person—every person without exception—has been redeemed by Christ; because Christ is in a way

[53]Karl Rahner, "Kirchengliedschaft (Kirchenzugehörigkeit)," in Karl Rahner, *Sacramentum Mundi* II (Freiburg: Herder, 1968), 1214 (author's own translation).

[54]Paul Knitter, "Roman Catholic Approaches to Other Religions: Developments and Tensions," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 8 (1984), 51.

[55]Josef Heislbetz, *Theologische Gründe der nichtchristlichen Religionen* (Freiburg: Herder, 1967); Heinz Schlette, *Towards a Theology of Religions* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1966); Gustave Thils, *Propos et problèmes de la théologie des religions non-chrétiennes* (Paris: Casterman, 1966); Edward Schillebeeckx, "The Church and Mankind," *Concilium* 1 (1965), 69-100; Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (New York: Doubleday, 1983); Eugene Hillman, *The Wider Ecumenism* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1968); Richard McBrien, *Catholicism* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1961), 245-277; Pietro Rossano, "Christ's Lordship and Religious Pluralism in Roman Catholic Perspective," in *Christ's Lordship and Religious Pluralism*, ed. Gerald Anderson and Thomas Stransky (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1981), 96-110.

[56]Gerald Anderson in Anderson and Stransky, *Christ's Lordship and Religious Pluralism*, 111.

united to the human person—every person without exception—even if the individual may not realize this fact."[57]

CHRIST ABOVE RELIGIONS

In recent years, however, some Catholic theologians have felt the need to move beyond Rahner's form of inclusivism[58] and his constitutive Christocentrism. "Just as Rahner no longer tied universal saving grace to the Church," they "no longer tie it to Christ,"[59] and no longer understand Christ as constitutive cause of saving grace.[60] This corresponds to a move to recognize other traditions as parallel and independent ways of salvation which are not necessarily oriented toward or a preparation for Christian revelation.[61]

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[57]John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*, no. 14, quoted in Anderson and Stransky, *Christ's Lordship and Religious Pluralism*, 111.

[58]In a contribution toward a critical ecumenical theology of religions, Hans Küng brands Rahner's inclusivist position ("all religious people are anonymous Christians") as inadequate because from the outset, this raises Christianity "to the status of a super system" and relegates the other religions "to a lower and partial knowledge of the truth" (Hans Küng, "Towards an Ecumenical Theology of Religions: Some Theses for Clarification," *Concilium* 183 [1986], 120 [hereafter cited as "Towards an Ecumenical Theology of Religions"]).

[59]Knitter, "Roman Catholic Approaches to Other Religions: Developments and Tensions," 52.

[60]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 33; Paul Knitter, "Catholic Theology of Religions at a Crossroads," *Concilium* 183 (1986), 101 (hereafter cited as "Catholic Theology of Religions"). For example, while H. Küng admits that the death of Jesus on the cross "for all" has universal significance (Hans Küng, *On Being a Christian* [Garden City: Doubleday, 1976], 426), "he does not relate the non-Christians to Jesus Christ in a causal way.... There is no causal link between Jesus Christ and the salvation of men other than a gnoseological one" (Lucien Richard, *What Are They Saying About Christ and World Religions?* [New York: Paulist Press, 1981], 43).

[61]Cf. Ignace Puthiadam, "Christian Faith and Life in a World of Religious Pluralism," *Concilium* 135 (1980), 105-107.

Nevertheless, despite this Christological shift, most theologians who are dissatisfied with the way Rahner prejudges other traditions as provisional, dependent, or "anonymously Christian" continue to affirm that Jesus Christ is God's full, final revelation, normative for all people.[62] "In other words, if Christ is no longer the constitutive cause of grace and therefore no longer needs to be *within* the religions to validate them, he still stands *above* them as the norm by which their validity is judged and in which they find fulfillment."[63]

CHRIST TOGETHER WITH THE RELIGIONS

Recently, a small number of Catholic theologians have begun to question the definitive normativity or finality of Jesus Christ and Christianity. They have joined other Christian theologians in the move beyond both the traditional exclusivist attitude toward other religions (salvation only in the Church or Christ) and the inclusivist attitude (which recognizes "the salvific richness of other faiths but then views this richness as the result of Christ's redemptive work and as having to be fulfilled in Christ") to a pluralist position ("a move away from insistence on the superiority or finality of Christ and Christianity

[62]Hans Küng affirms: "The most fundamental characteristic of Christianity is that it considers this Jesus as ultimately decisive, definitive, *archetypal* (the German word is *massgebend*, better translated as 'normative') for man's relations with God, with his fellow man, with society" (Küng, *On Being a Christian*, 123). "Any theologian who is not prepared to give up this normativity and finality of Christ does so ... because otherwise he or she would be abandoning the central declaration of the Scriptures that go to make up the New Testament" (Küng, "Towards an Ecumenical Theology of Religions," 122).

[63]Knitter, "Catholic Theology of Religions," 102. Knitter claims that in different forms, this view is represented by H. Küng, M. Hellwig, W. Bühlmann, A. Camps, P. Schoonenberg (Knitter, "Catholic Theology of Religions," 102). Cf. Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 130-135 and notes.

toward a recognition of the independent validity of other ways").[64] They suggest that pluralism may be God's will and that other traditions may have their own independent validity and place in God's plan, alongside of Christ and Christianity. "Buddhism or Hinduism may be as important for the history of salvation as is Christianity, or other revealors *[sic]* and saviors may be as important as Jesus of Nazareth."[65] In this pluralist model, Christ is viewed *together with* rather than against, within or above other religions and other religious figures. But it is felt that the relativity of Christ can be admitted without sacrificing his distinctiveness and universal relevance.[66]

Paul Knitter, professor of theology at Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio, exemplifies this pluralist position. His thought appears to have developed in three stages.

Stage I: A Challenge to the Finality of Jesus Christ

Already in 1978-1979, Knitter challenged the view that Christianity binds its adherents to the superiority, normativity and finality of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. He explained that such a view is untenable in the light of a modern hermeneutic of Scripture and a revisionist method in theology. It is also subversive of genuine dialogue with adherents of other faiths.[67] Adopting a consistent consciousness theology of revelation, he argued that revelation and salvation occur when the person is drawn into a world constituted by myth and symbol.

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[64]Paul Knitter, "Preface," in *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*, ed. John Hick and Paul Knitter (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1987), viii.

[65]Knitter, "Catholic Theology of Religions," 103.

[66]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 146.

[67]Paul Knitter, "World Religions and the Finality of Christ: A Critique of Hans Küng's *On Being a Christian*," *Horizons* 5 (1978), 151-164.

> Myth-symbols save. Historical facts do not.... It is only when we are grasped by and find ourselves responding with our whole being to a symbol, myth or story that we are encountering the divine, touching and being touched by "the Ground of Being," and experiencing grace.[68]

Knitter maintains that myth and symbol are salvific not because they correspond to some antecedent objective reality, but because they reach into "the person's innermost being ... and (renew) the whole self."[69] This implies that Christians need not understand the symbol of the Incarnation as a statement about an actual occurrence in the past. It is a myth-symbol on the same level with the stories of the wonderful birth and exaltation of the savior figures of Buddhism and Hinduism. "If it is true that it is the myth-symbol that saves, not historical facts as such, then Christianity is placed essentially on the same level with other religions."[70] Knitter is confident that "such insights will open up new avenues in the present day dialogue among world religions."[71]

Avery Dulles protested: "To hold that salvation is given by such a myth (i.e., myth as a product of creative imagination, the doctrine of the Incarnation viewed as a myth which cannot be taken as a cognitive statement about Jesus) rather than by the redemptive action of God in his incarnate Son, radically shifts the center of Christian faith."[72] Along with many contemporary theologians, he denies that such a transposition is called for by sound developments in hermeneutics or theological method. Dulles affirms that Charles Davis had good reason to write some years ago: "Frankly I do not myself see how the universality and finality of Christ can be denied without emptying the

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[68]Paul Knitter, "Jesus-Buddha-Krishna: Still Present?" *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 16 (1979), 657, cf. 651-664.

[69]Knitter, "Jesus-Buddha-Krishna: Still Present?", 657, cf. 651-664.

[70]Knitter, "Jesus-Buddha-Krishna: Still Present?", 664, cf. 664-670.

[71]Knitter, "Jesus-Buddha-Krishna: Still Present?", 664, cf. 664-670.

[72]Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1983), 189-190 (hereafter cited as *Models of Revelation*).

Christian tradition of meaning."[73] What Davis affirms does not deny "that Christ is a symbol or that the Christ story is in some sense a myth." However, it does imply that "the myth or symbol is disclosive of the meaning inherent in the Christ-event itself."[74]

Stage II: Theocentrism

The second stage of Knitter's theology of religions is found in the book *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions* (1985). After an excellent survey of Christian attitudes toward the World Religions, Knitter concludes that from the early part of this century an evolution has been taking place within Christian theology of religions, an evolution from ecclesiocentrism (Christ/Church against the religions) to christocentrism (Christ within or above) to theocentrism. Theocentrism means that the center of salvation history and the starting point for interreligious dialogue is no longer the Church (as necessary for salvation) nor Christ (as normative for salvation) but God, the divine Mystery. It is God, and not the Church and Christ, "towards whom all religions move, and from whom they gain their salvific efficacy."[75] At this time, Knitter felt that the theocentric model for a theology of religions "holds the greatest promise for the future of interreligious dialogue and for the continued evolution of the meaning of Jesus Christ for the world."[76]

He was aware, however, that many would argue that theocentrism contradicts the understanding of Christ affirmed by the New Testament and by tradition, that it weakens both personal commitment to Jesus

[73]Charles Davis, *Christ and the World Religions* (London: Hodder & Staughton, 1970), 127.

[74]Dulles, *Models of Revelation*, 190.

[75]Gavin D'Costa, "The Pluralist Paradigm in the Christian Theology of Religions," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 39 (1986), 212.

[76]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 166-167.

Christ and a distinctly Christian contribution to the needs of the world.[77] Knitter responds that this is not the case—that the christology of the theocentric model is a valid interpretation of Christian tradition and experience (Ch. 9) and that a theocentric method has validity for interreligious dialogue (Ch. 10). This analysis will concentrate on his defense of theocentric christology.

Knitter seeks to establish a universal relevance of Christ which does not insist on his definitive and normative relevance.[78] He rejects the relativism of Ernst Troeltsch which denies any uniqueness to Jesus and reduces him to one of the many revelations appropriate to a particular culture and epoch. On the other hand, he objects to the traditional Catholic models which insist on either exclusive or inclusive uniqueness for Jesus. "All these traditional Christian claims are insufficiently sensitive to the way they contradict contemporary awareness of historical relativity and the way they impede authentic dialogue with believers of other faiths."[79] He proposes a non-normative, theocentric christology in which Jesus possesses a "relational" or "complementary" uniqueness "defined by its ability to relate to—that is to include and be included by—other unique religious figures."[80] Jesus remains unique and decisive for his followers, but he also possesses universal relevance for other religions. His uniqueness is essentially related to other religious figures. Here Jesus is viewed not as exclusive or absolutely normative but "as

[77]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 167.

[78]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 142.

[79]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 171.

[80]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 171-172. In speaking of "non-normative Christology," Knitter is "not questioning norms *simpliciter*, but absolute or one-and-only norms—norms that have to be exclusive or at least inclusive of all others. In my proposed model, Jesus remains universally normative, but I am asking whether Christians can recognize that other revelations or revealers might also be universally normative" (Paul Knitter, "Review Symposium: Author's Response," *Horizons* 13 [1986], 131).

theocentric, as a universally relevant manifestation (sacrament, incarnation) of divine revelation and salvation."[81]

Knitter argues that non-normative, theocentric christology does not contradict the New Testament proclamation of Jesus and is a valid interpretation of that proclamation. It is a new christology and a new interpretation occasioned by a new *kairos*[82] in history—the situation of a deepened historical consciousness, a new awareness of religious pluralism and a new vision of religious unity—the unitive pluralism of religions.[83] This situation forms a new horizon of human experience within which the text and context of the New Testament must be understood and interpreted if we are to hear what it really means today. This implies that the tradition must meet new questions and face possibly radical re-interpretation.[84]

Knitter intends to show that in the light 1) of New Testament christology, 2) of the psychological, cultural and historical background of the New Testament exclusivist language, 3) of the implications of contemporary transcendental, process and liberation Christologies and 4) of the nature of resurrection faith, it is possible to respond to the *kairos* of today and endorse a theocentric theology of religions, based on a theocentric non-normative reinterpretation of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ.

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[81]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 172.

[82]A *kairos* is a special moment in history "when, because of the particular constellation of events and personalities, genuinely new possibilities and advances are latent" (Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 18).

[83]"Unitive pluralism is a unity in which each religion, although losing some of its individualism (its separate ego) will intensify its personality (its self-awareness through relationship). Each religion will retain its uniqueness, but this uniqueness will develop and take on new depths by relating to other religions in mutual dependence" (Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 9).

[84]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 172-173, 18-19.

1. Uniqueness and New Testament Christology

What can we learn from the evolution of New Testament christology? Knitter emphasizes first of all that Jesus' preaching was theocentric, centered on the "kingdom of God," that he most likely understood himself as the eschatological prophet, anointed by God's Spirit "who was to complete the mission of the earlier prophets by announcing and enacting the good news of God's final rule." He understood his personal relationship with God on the basis of an "original Abba-experience" as one "of special intimacy with God, a special sonship." This awareness of God as his Father "does not automatically imply exclusivity" but it does "indicate specialness, uniqueness." However, we are reminded that "in his awareness of himself as the eschatological prophet ... Jesus remained profoundly theocentric."[85]

On the basis of a saving and revelatory experience of Jesus, and in dialogue with images and categories of various cultural contexts of the early Church, the early communities expressed the meaning of Jesus "in various trajectories or creedal perspectives ... which developed simultaneously and with intermingling influence." Knitter adopts the dubious classification of the four creedal perspectives suggested by E. Schillebeeckx: 1) the *maranatha* or *parousia* christology, 2) the divine man christology, 3) the wisdom and logos christologies, and 4) the paschal or easter christology. The New Testament is "the end result and merger of different trajectories and images of Jesus, each having a specific context, presupposition and implication."[86] With J. A. T. Dunn, Knitter recognizes that from the beginning "the significance of Christ could only be apprehended by a diversity of formulations which, though not always compatible with each other were not regarded as rendering each other invalid."[87] He insists that

[85]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 173-175.

[86]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 175-177.

[87]James D.G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making* (London: SCM Press, 1980), 265-267; quoted by Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 178.

this diversity must be preserved, in particular when evaluating the importance of the incarnational model which represents the final stage of New Testament christology.

This christology with its diversity can only be understood as a process of gradual unfolding, a process which was, Knitter emphasizes, not a "development" which made explicit what was implicit from the beginning,[88] but a "genuine evolution of understanding" in which "new species of symbols and images were employed" which were "genuinely different from what was earlier understood." To portray the process as a development from implicit to explicit understanding would not only "blur the picture of what really happened" but also "blunt the contemporary significance of that picture."[89]

As a clear example of this process of evolution, Knitter proposes "the way the early Churches came to recognize Jesus as divine, as the incarnate Son of God." There was an evolution from "a predominantly functional, eschatological understanding of Jesus as Son of God to an incarnational, even ontological proclamation of his divinity" in John's Gospel.[90] This incarnational christology became the dominant christology of the second and third centuries.

Knitter affirms that this general picture of the evolution of New Testament christology provides guidelines for the task of interpreting Jesus' uniqueness with a view to interreligious dialogue:

a) "The christological trajectories and titles are not definitions but interpretations" in mythic-symbolic language "of who Jesus was for his early followers." These mythic models or symbolic images should not be taken literally, but should be taken seriously "by entering into the interpretative process ... by feeling [their] symbolic power ... by

[88]As proposed by Charles F. D. Moule, *The Origin of Christology* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1977), 3-4, 135 (hereafter cited as *The Origin of Christology*).

[89]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 179.

[90]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 179-180. A rather incoherent spelling out of this progression is given in these pages.

understanding them in their own historical context, by judging and interpreting their meaning in our own situations."[91]

b) The diversity of New Testament christology is to be preserved. "No single New Testament trajectory or image of Jesus should be absolutized and allowed to absorb the others." Not all were then and are now equally relevant, but all possess a certain validity, and they complement each other. "As historical contexts change, some models might have to be toned down and others played up." Knitter explains that this is what John Hick is doing in dialogue with other religions when he warns against understanding Jesus only or primarily according to a literal interpretation of the Incarnation.[92]

c) The New Testament witness about Jesus must not be absolutized. "All the New Testament images of Jesus *taken together*" do not exhaust the meaning of Jesus for Christians and for the world. "The evolutionary process of interpretation" mirrored in the New Testament "must continue today in the same manner in which it took place then: in continuity with what went before ... faithful to the past without being limited by it, preserving the past by renewing it with new symbols."[93]

d) This continuing evolutionary process of interpretation of christology "will need to make use of one of the main forces that moved it forward in the New Testament period: dialogue with other cultures and other religions."[94]

e) The effort to continue the evolution of christology requires "a renewal or return to the theocentrism that marked Jesus' understanding of his mission and ... of himself." This theocentric basis is needed to

[91]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 180.

[92]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 181.

[93]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 181.

[94]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 181.

be true to the origins and to promote the effort "to understand, value and dialogue with other religions."[95]

Critique of (1) Uniqueness and New Testament Christology

Knitter is undoubtedly correct when he affirms the unanimous consensus of New Testament scholars that "the focus and core content of Jesus' original message was the 'kingdom of God'," and therefore theocentric.[96] However, his affirmation only expresses half the truth, for it does justice neither to the special character of this messenger and his message nor to the indissoluble linking of the preaching to the person of the preacher. In Jesus' message, the kingdom of God is inextricably bound up with the person of Jesus. "It is the person of Jesus whose activities effect the inbreaking of the eschatological rule of God and who therefore stands at the center of his eschatological message."[97] The synoptic tradition contains "uncontroverted sayings which in a direct manner bring to expression the function of Jesus as eschatological mediator of salvation": Lk. 11:20 par.; Mk. 3:27 par.; Lk. 10:23f. par.[98] H. Schürman concurs that in his original *Basileia*-preaching, Jesus directly co-thematized himself (e.g., Lk. 10:23f. par.). "He does not do this in an explicit manner (titularly) but in a 'self-forgetfulness' which emphasized the 'coming of God'. But these are implicit yet direct christological statements of Jesus about himself as the mediator of the Basileia."[99]

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[95]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 181-182.

[96]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 173.

[97]Werner G. Kümmel, *Promise and Fulfillment* (London: SCM Press, 1967), 108.

[98]Anton Vögtle, "Der verkündigende und der verkündigte Jesus 'Christus'," in *Wer ist Jesus Christus?*, ed. Joseph Sauer (Freiburg: Herder, 1977), 43-44 (hereafter cited as "Jesus 'Christus'"), all translations from this source are the author's own.

[99]Heinz Schürmann, *Gottes Reich—Jesu Geschick* (Freiburg: Herder, 1983), 43-44 (author's own translation).

Jesus' kingdom message, then, is centered about God certainly, but also about himself. His claim to inaugurate the end-time salvific action of God as the final revealer implies as its basis an immediacy to God which alone is able to explain this unheard-of claim. Jesus objectified and verbalized his unique relationship to God by means of his proclamation of the presence of the Rule of God through his activity and person.[100] The resurrection-exaltation revealed that the still outstanding coming of the consummated kingdom of God was connected with his person, as the prayer of the Aramaic-speaking primitive community proves: *Maranatha* (Our Lord, come).

It was this immediacy to God revealed in Jesus' lifetime and confirmed by the resurrection that the New Testament communities explicitated by means of multiple titles and images culminating in the pre-existence and incarnation christologies.[101] C. F. D. Moule is correct in seeing here a "development" of "what was already there from the beginning." The various interpretations of Jesus found in the New Testament "are not successive additions of something new, but only the drawing out and articulating of what is there. They represent various stages in the development of perception."[102] Of course, Knitter is correct in claiming the employment of "new species of symbols and images," but they are used to unfold and make explicit something already implicit. The resulting christologies do not represent completely new growths, new species in a process of evolution. Both the functional, eschatological understanding of Jesus as Son of God and the incarnational proclamation of his divinity were explicitations of the perception of Jesus' immediacy to God present from the beginning. They are expressions of "the transcendental quality which from the beginning seems to have attached to Christ."[103]

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[100]Rahner, *Foundations*, 249-252.

[101]Vögtle, "Jesus 'Christus'," 91.

[102]Moule, *The Origin of Christology*, 3.

[103]Moule, *The Origin of Christology*, 141. In connection with Rom. 1:3-4, M. Hengel affirms: "For to talk of Jesus as Son of God is at the same time to make

The conclusions to be drawn are that an exclusive theocentrism is not to be found in Jesus' message of the Kingdom and that the New Testament communities developed a christology which possessed transcendent implications from the beginning. A theocentrism faithful to the New Testament includes a christocentrism. Neither is exclusive of the other.

In the light of his previous writings, questions arise when Knitter describes the christological trajectories and titles as interpretations in mythic symbolic language "of who Jesus was for his followers," and when he writes that the mythic models or symbolic images should not be taken literally but should be taken seriously. Does this imply that the symbolic language is expressive but non-indicative, i.e., not disclosive of ontological reality? Does the myth-symbol of incarnation describe no objective occurrence involving Jesus of Nazareth? Or has Knitter modified the position he held in Stage I? The following sections may throw light on these questions.

2. *Uniqueness and Exclusiveness*

New Testament christology is not only diverse, evolutionary and dialogical. Much of it "is also *exclusive*, or at least *normative*" (cf. 1 Tim. 2:5; Acts 4:12; Jn. 1:14, 14:6; 1 Cor. 15:21-22; Heb. 9:12). Knitter admits that when the early Christians proclaimed that Jesus was "one and only," the "final" prophet providing the normative, final word, they meant it. But he claims that such "one and only" and "final" language belongs "more to the *medium* used by the New Testament than to its core *message*."[104]

He argues that to attain the core message of the New Testament, we must free its expression from three limitations of the culture-limited environment of that period: 1) from the "classicist culture" for which

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a statement about the 'transcendent' being of the risen Christ with God in his glory, into which he has been 'transformed'" (Martin Hengel, *The Son of God* [London: SCM Press, 1976], 60).

[104]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 182.

truth was one, unchanging, normative, 2) from the first Christians' Jewish eschatological-apocalyptic mentality, which led them to interpret their experience of God in Jesus as final and unsurpassable, 3) from the survival language of a community with a minority status which formulated its beliefs in the absolute and exclusive terms necessary to project a clear identity and to evoke total commitment.

"Understood from such a sociological perspective, the absolute and exclusive quality of New Testament christology tells us more about the social situation of the early Church than about the ontological nature of Jesus. This language was more moral than metaphysical." Knitter affirms, however, that this does not imply that there is no truth-content, no ontology at all, within early christology. "The early Christians were proposing a world view that included a definite view of Jesus."[105] But he is confident that if we understand the absolute, one-and-only descriptions of Jesus as insuring the survival of the community rather than as offering a once-and-for-all definition of Jesus, we can today still adhere to the basic world view of early Christianity without insisting on its absolute, exclusive adjectives. "In fact, in our present pluralistic situation, this seems to be what Christians are called to do."[106]

This sociological function of christological language reveals, claims Knitter, the basic nature of the exclusivist language used in the New Testament. The "one and only" language belongs not to the language of philosophy and dogmatics but rather to the language of confession and love. A husband's profession that his wife is "the most beautiful woman in the world" is readily understood at its proper level of meaning and is not transposed into an historically exclusive claim. The confession that Jesus is the one and only Savior should be interpreted analogously. It defines identity and membership within the community, personal relationship and commitment rather than the person of Jesus for all time. In other words, the language of

[105]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 184.

[106]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 183-184.

the heart is not the language of the head and their differences must be respected.[107]

Most recently, Knitter has modified his terminology under the influence of liberation theology. He affirms that in order to distinguish New Testament talk about Jesus from philosophical language, "it would be more accurate and pastorally effective to call the New Testament claims about Jesus 'action language'," rather than "survival" and "love" language. The New Testament writer used "one and only" language in order to promote "the action or practice of total commitment to his vision and way," not *primarily* to give definite theologico-philosophical statements which exclude others. "If Christians today can continue with that same action ... without the traditional 'one and only' language, then they are still holding to the core content of the original message."[108]

Critique of (2) Uniqueness and Exclusiveness

Knitter's attempt to separate the "one and only" and "final" language from the core message of the New Testament is particularly unconvincing. The "one and only" and "final" language brought to expression what the disciples experienced in Jesus' life and death and in the resurrection appearances. Right from the beginning, the revelation concerning Jesus Christ was communicated in confessional formulas, e.g., "Jesus is Lord" (Rom. 10:9). "The confession (*homologia*) represented the agreement or consensus, in which the Christian community was united; that core of essential conviction and belief to which Christians subscribed and openly testified."[109] According to J. D. G. Dunn, "Jesus is Lord" (Rom. 10:9) is the

[107]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 184-186.

[108]Paul Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions," in Hick and Knitter, *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, 196.

[109]Vernon Neufeld, *The Earliest Christian Confessions* (Leiden: Brill, 1963), 20.

principal confession of faith for Paul and his churches.[110] "Lord" was the title given to Jesus as a consequence of his resurrection-exaltation. The confession "Jesus is Lord" explicitated the meaning of the resurrection of Jesus and illuminated the function and nature of the risen Jesus. By his resurrection-exaltation, he now shares the authority and ruling power of God. Sharing in the divine glory, he now possesses a divine condition. The risen one possesses "glory," "dominion" and will come in judgement. In other words, the whole gamut of prerogatives and attributes hitherto reserved to Yahweh were his. As a means of expressing this royal and transcendent status, the Palestinian Jewish Christians borrowed the title "Lord," which the Semitic and Greek speaking Jews of Palestine applied to God, and used it of Jesus. "The title would suggest an equation of Jesus with Yahweh, a setting of him on a par with Yahweh, but not an identification—because he is not *Abba.*"[111]

This is corroborated by the Aramaic prayer *marana-tha* ("Our Lord, come") by which the primitive Aramaic-speaking community implored the speedy coming of the risen Lord from heaven as the mediator of definitive salvation. This prayer attributes to the risen Lord a function which is without analogy in the Jewish world of ideas.[112] "That the petition for the coming of salvation is directed not to God himself, but to a bearer of salvation different from God was from the standpoint of every Jewish expectation of salvation something absolutely unheard of."[113] Jesus is here placed on the side of God as a figure of "one and only," "final" and even divine significance.[114]

What the *marana-tha* prayer presupposed has been explicitated in

[110]James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), 50.

[111]Joseph Fitzmyer, *To Advance the Gospel* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 223.

[112]Leonhard Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament* II (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 25.

[113]Vögtle, "Jesus 'Christus'," 74.

[114]Hans Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden nicht bei den Toten* (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag,

the pre-Pauline hymn to Christ quoted in Phil. 2:6-11 ("God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every other name" [v. 9]). This means that God has given the exalted one his own name. "For the expression 'the name above every name' is to be understood as a paraphrase of the most holy name of God, i.e., as a rendering of the tetragram" (YHWH) which is expressed by the title *Kyrios* (Lord).[115] But this means that he was given "the name of God himself denoting the divine being."[116] "The name received by Jesus is not a simple 'title'; it designates the dignity and manner of being that the title *Kyrios* supposes."[117]

Because the exalted Jesus shares the manner of being proper to God, v. 10 applies to him what Is. 45:23 said of Yahweh: "To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." Isaiah was thinking of the universal worship of Yahweh by all the nations of the earth. The hymn extends this worship "to include all sentient beings throughout the entire cosmos and applies it to Christ."[118] He receives the cosmic adoration appropriate to God and all creation is subject to him as *Kyrios*. These verses express "the conviction that henceforth Christ is the Lord of all life and holds the reins of cosmic and human destiny in His hands."[119]

These examples indicate that the confession "Jesus is Lord" expressed faith in Jesus' divinity. "'Lord' does not just mean 'a lord'

1985), 114 (hereafter cited as *Sucht den Lebenden*), all translations from this source are the author's own.

[115]Ulrich B. Müller, "Der Christushymnus Phil 2:6-11," *Zeitschrift fiir die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 79 (1988), 38 (author's own translation).

[116]Reginald Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (New York: Charles Scribners & Sons, 1965), 248.

[117]Jacques Dupont, "Nom de Jesus," in *Supplement au Dictionnaire de la Bible* VI, eds. Henri Cazelles and André Feuillet (Paris: Letouzey et Ane, 1960), 518 (author's own translation).

[118]Ralph P. Martin, *Carmen Christi* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 255.

[119]Martin, *Carmen Christi*, xxxiii.

who can stand alongside competing gods and saviors. 'Lord' carries the authority of the one God of all humanity."[120] "One and only" and "final" language, therefore, cannot be separated from the core message of the New Testament concerning the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and its meaning. This language expresses what the central confession that Jesus is Lord and the original faith that God raised him from the dead really mean: "God was in Christ reconciling *the world* to himself" (2 Cor. 5:19). Through the original Easter experience occurring in the revelatory encounter with the risen Jesus it was definitively revealed:

> God himself has acted eschatologically *in Jesus* (and nowhere else); and *Jesus* was and is the eschatological (surpassing all that went before and unsurpassable by all still to come) messenger and mediator of salvation, the Messiah, God's Word and Son himself; *his* life and cross and he himself are placed in force and validity as universally significant for salvation. First from there can it be said that Jesus' whole humanity was the definitive and full self-expression of God in history, therefore, the incarnation of the Word or Son of God (Jn. 1:14).[121]

3. Uniqueness and Contemporary Understanding of Incarnation

Knitter attempts to strengthen his case by showing that a non-normative christology is implicit in the transcendental theology of Karl Rahner and the process theology of John Cobb and Norman Pittenger, "even if they do not realize it or are reluctant to follow the momentum of their own thought."[122]

Since Rahner affirms that the incarnation of God in Jesus is "the realization of the highest possibility of man's being (a reality absolutely open upwards) ... the unique *supreme* case of the total actualization

[120]Pheme Perkins, "Christianity and World Religions," *Interpretation* 40 (1986), 371.

[121]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 319-320.

[122]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 186.

of human reality,"[123] and since Knitter thinks Rahner states "that the divine self communication constituting the hypostatic union in Jesus is 'intended for everyone',"[124] Knitter claims that he "finds it difficult to get a firm grasp of [the] reasons why" Rahner still insists that the Incarnation (the culmination and fulfillment of what human nature is meant to be) "has taken place and can take place only once."[125] He maintains that in one context, "Rahner seems to argue that the eternal word has been and can be identified with only one human being."[126] He finds that elsewhere Rahner affirms that to claim that incarnation "has to take place in the case of every man" would be to reduce it "to the level of nature, to the level of what is given always and everywhere.

[123]Rahner, *Theological Investigations* I, 183; Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations* IV (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), 110; quoted in Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 188.

[124]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 188, quoting Rahner, *Foundations*, 201. Rahner actually states: "The assumption of the human and the 'union' (in the hypostatic union) has the character of a self-communication of God. In this self-communication a human reality is assumed so that the reality of God is communicated to what is assumed, to the humanity, and in the first instance that of Christ. But this very communication which is the purpose of the assumption is a communication in and through what we call grace and glory, and this is what is intended for everyone" (Rahner, *Foundations*, 201). Previously, Rahner had explained: "The intrinsic effect of the hypostatic union for the assumed humanity of the Logos consists precisely and in a real sense *only* in the very thing which is ascribed to all men as their goal and their fulfillment, namely, the immediate vision of God which the created human soul of Christ enjoys" (Rahner, *Foundations*, 200).

[125]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 188.

[126]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 188, quoting Rahner, *Foundations*, 224: "For 'what' he [Jesus] is as the self-expression of the Logos and 'what' we are is the same. We call it 'human nature'. But the Unbridgeable difference is constituted by the fact that this 'what' in him is spoken as his self-expression, and this is not the case with us." Knitter explains: "This means that Jesus is 'the offer for us' of God's divinizing grace; we are 'the recipients of God's offer to us'." Cf. Rahner, *Foundations*, 202.

The truth of a divine humanity would be mythologized if it were simply a datum of every person always and everywhere."[127]

Knitter claims that in both arguments, Rahner seems to believe that to allow incarnation, as it took place in Jesus, to possibly happen elsewhere would be to jeopardize what did take place in Jesus. "To make the incarnation into a myth applicable to all humanity would be to undermine its historicity."[128]

These answers do not satisfy Knitter. He claims that Rahner (and the Process theologians) rightly respects and treats belief in the Incarnation as a true *myth*, a meaningful model, for expressing what Christians have experienced Jesus to be. He takes "the myth seriously but not literally."[129] He claims further that in taking the myth seriously and reappropriating its truth, Rahner (and the Process theologians) interprets the myth of God's incarnation in Jesus as an expression of the non-dualistic unity between divinity and humanity. "He endorses a given, at least potential at-one-ment between God and humanity which can be realized and lived by all."[130]

Knitter holds that this is what Troeltsch, Toynbee, Jung, the Catholic model with the notion of the supernatural existential, and Panikkar with his cosmotheandric principle all assert: that "incarnation is not a one-time-event. Rather it is an ideal for all, an ideal rooted in the ancient christian belief in the one, universal logos or wisdom of God."[131] He affirms (wrongly) that all this is what Rahner *says* in order

[127]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 188, quoting Rahner, *Foundations*, 218; Rahner, *Theological Investigations* IV, 112.

[128]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 188.

[129]Knitter explains that this means: "they avoid the incredible (for many) and exclusivistic understanding of Jesus as a preexistent divine being who comes down from heaven, takes on a human nature (without a human personality) does his work of redeeming and then goes back to heaven" (Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 191).

[130]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 191.

[131]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 191.

to show how belief in the Incarnation resonates with human experience. But he laments that he "hold(s) back from facing what seems to me to be the clear implications" of what he is saying: "that there can be *other incarnations*, other individuals who achieved (or were granted) the same fullness of God-man unity realized in Jesus."[132]

Knitter believes that Rahner has never "squarely faced the question why the eternal Word cannot be fully incarnated in more than one person." On purely theoretical grounds, Knitter does not see why the Incarnation must of necessity be unique in history, and he holds that the affirmation that Jesus is the only incarnation of God should not be "dogmatically mediated"—that is, made only on the basis of Christian experience and doctrine. It has to be "'critically mediated'—that is, open to examination and verification through concrete dialogue with other religions."[133]

Critique of (3) Uniqueness and Contemporary Understanding of Incarnation

Knitter is correct in stressing that Rahner considers the Incarnation as the highest actuation of man's essence: "The incarnation of God is ... the unique *supreme* case of the actuation of the essence of human reality."[134] But Rahner and the notion of the supernatural existential do not say, as Knitter claims, that "incarnation is not a one-time-event,"[135] for Rahner explains that the fulfillment of man's essence in the Incarnation remains a potential and hypothetical fulfillment "as long as it is not proved that (man's) transcendence would lose all meaning if it did not find precisely this fulfillment." Rather, the fulfillment of the transcendence of man by way of incarnation is dependent on the

[132]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 191.

[133]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 191-192.

[134]Rahner, *Theological Investigations* IV, 110 (translation modified in the light of the original German, *Schriften zur Theologie* IV [Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1962], 142). Also cf. Rahner, *Foundations*, 218.

[135]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 191.

freedom of God and cannot be known "independently of the revelation of its *de facto* existence."[136] Secondly, concludes Rahner, "it follows that the potentiality need not be realized in every man," and the existential fact of sin and alienation "shows us when our situation is brought to light in the word of God, that the possibility has not in fact been actualized in us."[137]

But the question remains: granted that there is no need for a universal incarnation, on the level of theoretical possibility could not the eternal Word be fully incarnated in more than one person? Could there not be more than one incarnation? To my knowledge, Rahner never explicitly discussed this question on the purely theoretical level. In recent theological discussion, it is a disputed question.[138]

However, we must also ask the question of fact. On the level of fact, the suggestion that the Word of God became incarnate in more than one human person is excluded by the revelation of the mystery of God's plan of salvation for all in Jesus Christ. "For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph. 1:9-10). "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross" (Col. 1:19-20), or more briefly: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor. 5:19).

Rahner accepts the idea of incarnation that informs the Christian

[136]Rahner, *Theological Investigations* IV, 110.

[137]Rahner, *Theological Investigations* IV, 110.

[138]For an affirmative answer, cf. Richard Viladesau, *Answering For Faith* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 236-244. For a negative answer, cf. Brian Hebblethwaite, *The Incarnation* (Cambridge: Oxford Univ. Press, 1987), 23, 166-169 (hereafter cited as *Incarnation*). Anselm Min, "Christology and Theology of Religions: John Hick and Karl Rahner," *Louvain Studies* 11 (1986), 12. The validity of an affirmative answer is not as clear-cut as Knitter believes.

tradition according to which God the Son's coming amongst us as one of us is necessarily particular and unique because the whole history of the world from start to finish is seen as pivoted upon the eternal Son's personal union with and self-expression in the humanity of Jesus of Nazareth. "Right from its very inception God's plan and God's execution of this plan in the implementation of his will to save all men has proceeded from the God-man as its starting point and to him as its goal."[139] Jesus Christ, the God-man, is then the goal "towards whom all history was leading, the climax in relation to whom all subsequent history takes its meaning, and in whom all things will in the end be summed up in God."[140] In this final state, Jesus Christ will be "the symbolic reality which conveys to us the immediacy of God,"[141] "the human face of God for all men and women for all eternity. As such, the incarnate Son can of course only be thought of as one."[142]

Rahner's transcendental christology, then, does not imply "that there can be other incarnations, other individuals who achieved (or were granted) the same fullness of God-human unity realized in Jesus."[143] Rahner accepts that the plan of salvation revealed in Jesus Christ implies that the incarnation of the eternal Word in Jesus of Nazareth is unique, and he sees no evidence that this has occurred in anyone else. He asks: "Where else is there a man in the clear tangible light of history who has ever made any claim" which implies "that this event has taken place in him.... Where apart from Jesus could I find the courage for such a belief?"[144]

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[139]Rahner, *Theological Investigations* X, 39.

[140]Hebblethwaite, *Incarnation*, 166.

[141]Rahner, *Theological Investigations* IV, 244; Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations* III, 44-45.

[142]Hebblethwaite, *Incarnation*, 166.

[143]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 191.

[144]Rahner, *Theological Investigations* V, 13. For Rahner's view of Jesus' claim, cf. Rahner, *Foundations*, 245-255.

In this second stage of his theology of religions, Knitter never explicitly explains his understanding of incarnation. In the previous section (2), Knitter conceded that though the language of the early Church "was more moral than metaphysical" and though "its purpose was more to define identity and membership within the community than to define the person of Jesus for all time," this does not mean "that there is no truth-content, no ontology at all within early Christianity."[145] Gavin D'Costa concludes from this that "unlike Hick," Knitter is "clear about the ontological claims of Christianity."[146] But apart from the ambiguous qualification added by Knitter to the above affirmation,[147] certain statements concerning Karl Rahner's (and the Process theologians') theology of incarnation raise questions concerning Knitter's understanding of incarnation. For example, he claims that Rahner treats belief in the Incarnation as a true *myth*, a meaningful model, for expressing what Christians have experienced Jesus to be, that he takes "the myth seriously but not literally."[148]

First of all, it must be pointed out that Rahner criticizes mythological understandings of the Incarnation.[149] For Rahner, the classical dogma of the Incarnation is not mythology and "the classical Christology of

[145]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 184.

[146]D'Costa, *Theology and Religious Pluralism*, 36.

[147]"The early Christians were proposing a world view that included a definite view of Jesus. Yet if we understand the absolute one-and-only descriptions of Jesus as insuring the survival of the community rather than as offering a once-and-for-all definition of Jesus, we can still adhere to the basic world view of early Christianity without insisting on its absolute, exclusive adjectives" (Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 184). But would we still have to adhere to the "definite (ontological?) view of Jesus"?

[148]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 191.

[149]Rahner, *Theological Investigations* I, 164, 179-180; idem, *Theological Investigations* IV, 117-118; idem, *Foundations*, 226-227.

the dogma is in no need of demythologization."[150] The dogma of the Incarnation is to be taken literally: the eternal Word of the Father became man.

Secondly, if the dogma of the Incarnation is to be taken literally, it is not a "myth" or a "model" in the sense of a representational picture or statement "for expressing what Christians have experienced Jesus to be." Rather, it is a literal, though mystery-filled, statement of what Christians believe Jesus to be. Certainly there are ways of picturing or representing the Incarnation, e.g., the kenotic model or the model rejected by Knitter.[151] "But the point is that these are precisely models of the Incarnation. Incarnation is not itself one of the models. Rather it is what is being pictured in these various in-adequate ways."[152]

Thirdly, in speaking of the Incarnation as a "myth" or "model" for expressing what Christians have experienced Jesus to be, Knitter arouses the suspicion that he has not changed the view he held in Stage I that Christians need not understand the myth-symbol of the Incarnation as a statement about an actual occurrence in the past, that it is expressive of Christian experience of who Jesus is for them but not disclosive of ontological reality. His vague concession that he does not mean "that there is no truth-content, no ontology at all within early Christology" does not quiet this suspicion.[153]

4. Uniqueness and Liberation Theology

Knitter also finds in liberation christology implicit pointers for the relativizing of the uniqueness of Jesus. Liberation theology insists on the primacy of praxis both for the origin and confirmation of theory and doctrine. The "truth" of dogma and tradition must continually be

[150]Rahner, *Theological Investigations* I, 198.

[151]Cf. note 128.

[152]Hebblethwaite, *Incarnation*, 7.

[153]Cf. notes 144 and 146.

exposed to the "ultimate arbiter" of truth which is "the transformative response of Christian praxis."[154] Applied to christology, this means:

> We cannot begin to know who this Jesus of Nazareth is unless we are following him, no matter what that demands. That is the starting point. Furthermore, everything we know or say about him must be repossessed and reclarified in the praxis of following him through the changing contexts of history. That is a never-ending process.[155]

As L. Boff tells us: "No title conferred on Christ can be absolutized."[156]

Besides warning against the "danger that Christology may assimilate the biblical titles of Christ *uncritically*, without an awareness of their historical relativity," liberation theologians are acutely aware of the danger of "ideologizing the titles of Christ," using them as a christological "justification" for "social and religious status." Therefore, there is a need to examine each of them under the lens of praxis. They emphasize that what is most important is not to proclaim "Lord, Lord" or "only Saviour, only Savior" but to work for the liberation of the kingdom (Mt. 7:21-23).[157]

Knitter lists four implications that such praxis-based christology contains for the question concerning the uniqueness of Jesus:

a) "Liberation christology clarifies what are the conditions of the possibility of claiming any kind of exclusive or inclusive uniqueness

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[154]Matthew Lamb, "Dogma, Experience, and Political Theology," *Concilium* 113 (1979), 87, quoted in Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 194. M. Lamb actually wrote: "The objectivity of the truth of dogmas is conditioned by the transformative response of Christian praxis." He cautions against overlooking "the imperatives to change which they (dogmas) express."

[155]This is Knitter's summary of the ideas of J. Sobrino, L. Boff and R. Ruether in Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 195.

[156]Leonardo Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1978), 229-231.

[157]Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator*, 229-231, 156-157.

of Jesus."[158] Knitter claims that what Sobrino affirms about the universality of Jesus is equally valid for uniqueness or finality:

> His universality cannot be demonstrated or proved on the basis of formulas or symbols that are universal in themselves: e.g., dogmatic formulas, the kerygma as event, the resurrection as universal symbol of hope and so forth. The real universality of Jesus shows up only in its concrete embodiment.[159]

Applied to Jesus' uniqueness or finality, Knitter interprets this to mean that Christian conviction and proclamation that Jesus is God's final or normative revelation cannot rest on traditional doctrine or on personal experience but can only be known and affirmed in the praxis of historical involvement.[160]

b) The method of liberation christology shows why normative claims for Jesus are not possible at present. An examination of the concrete data of the praxis of Jesus and the Church reveals that the data is not sufficient to establish the normativity or finality of Jesus. Christians have neither actively learned from nor worked with other religions sufficiently to "know, with certainty, that there is no other like Jesus" or "to make the universal claim that Jesus' revelation surpasses and is therefore normative for these other faiths."[161]

c) The method of liberation christology also shows why normative claims for Jesus are not necessary. In the perspective of liberation theology, "the one thing necessary to be a Christian and to carry on the job of theology is commitment to the kingdom vision of liberating, redemptive action." At present, "on the basis of their praxis, Christians *do* know that the vision and power of Jesus of Nazareth *is* a means for liberation from injustice and oppression"

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[158]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 195.

[159]Jon Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1978), 9-10.

[160]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 195-196.

[161]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 196.

and for promoting the kingdom of God. Uncertainty whether Jesus is normative for all others "does not interfere with commitment to the praxis of following him."[162]

d) "Liberation christology allows, even requires, that Christians recognize the possibility of other liberators or saviors, other incarnations." If liberating praxis is the "ultimate arbiter" of truth and authentic divine revelation, "Christians must be open to the possibility that in their dialogue with other believers they may encounter religious figures whose vision offers a liberating praxis and promise of the kingdom equal to that of Jesus."[163]

Critique of (4) Uniqueness and Liberation Theology

Clodovis Boff, liberation theologian and brother of Leonardo Boff, has written a remarkable work on the epistemological presuppositions for a theology of liberation.[164] The theology of liberation understands itself to be a "new way of doing theology," a new style of "thinking the faith." "This style finds expression in a series of principles, in the form of propositions or theses intended to inform and orientate theological practice." But in its initial phase, liberation theology did not explicitate its method. The simple statement of its theses or postulates took the place of a methodology. "The liberation theologians were content to do theology 'differently' without concerning themselves with the rational justification of the original intuitions and attitudes supporting their theoretical practice."[165] This was inevitable and completely understandable. The history of any discipline reveals the priority of hesitant, error-plagued beginnings to theoretical reflection on methodology. Boff's book resulted from the realization that the

[162]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 196.

[163]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 196-197.

[164]Clodovis Boff, *Theology and Praxis: Epistemological Foundations* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1987), hereafter cited as *Theology and Praxis.*

[165]Boff, *Theology and Praxis*, xxii.

moment had arrived to go "beyond the first phase, which ignored its own methodology, and launch a basic reflection having as its goal, before all else, to supply a critical basis for ... (liberation theology's) postulates ... and then to articulate the findings in such a way as to lead toward the systematization of a method."[166]

In the specific case of praxis, Boff asks: "What does it mean when one says that praxis is the 'criterion of truth' for theological theory?"[167] He cautions that the roots of this postulate's theoretical claims may be found in pragmatism in which the validity of an idea is judged by its concrete, external results. He points out the affinity between the situation of liberation theology and that of the young Marx who insisted so much on praxis as opposed to theory. Just as the young Marx was loosening his ties to the young Hegelians, especially Feuerbach, when he wrote the theses on Feuerbach, expressed "in a language that cries out to be transcended," so political theology today "seems not quite sure of what it confusedly sees in the dark." This is the reason for "its strident demanding manifestos in behalf of praxis. It exalts the 'epistemological destiny' of praxis to the point of threatening the autonomy of theoretical practice—to the detriment of praxis itself." It "goes so far as to ... dismember the living movement of the dialectic of theory and praxis."[168]

Boff stresses that the thesis that "praxis is the criterion of truth" has to be correctly posited since its unelaborated formulation is ambiguous and erroneous. "The assertion that praxis is the criterion of (theological) truth entails the basic, persistent ambiguity that I have been denouncing all through this study and that I am making an effort to dispel.... It consists in the identification, indeed the confusion of the real with the knowledge of the real, of agapic practice with theological practice, of pistic practice with its educated discourse."

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[166]Boff, *Theology and Praxis*, xxi-xxii.

[167]Boff, *Theology and Praxis*, 197.

[168]Boff, *Theology and Praxis*, 197-198.

Boff explains that each of the two orders mentioned—the theoretical and the practical—possesses criteria of truth corresponding to itself (respectively, theoretical and practical). It is necessary, therefore, to distinguish "theological criteriology" from "pistic criteriology." "The former is of an *epistemological* order and concerned with the rules of the *theoretical* practice of the *theologian*; the latter is of an *existential* order, and springs from principles that orientate the *concrete* practice of the *believer*."[169] Only the introduction of a mistaken or distorted relationship between these different levels leads to the disqualification of orthodoxy in favor of orthopraxy. As in the case with other disciplines, "theology is exempt from any wholly external criterion of truth, any jurisdictional 'tribunal' having the right to pronounce from without on the validity of its propositions."[170]

Praxis, then, "is not an immediate norm for theology." The *norma normans* is the foundational message which is the *norma normans* both of faith and of theology. "Theology does not intend a given empirical reality, but the historical reality of revelation, 'deposited' in the code of its founding interpretation."[171] The living practice of the faith by the Christian community can only be considered an *indirect* norm for theology since it has to pass by way of the mediation of the normative foundational message. Boff points out further that praxis is not, as such, *what explains*, but, on the contrary, is *what is to be explained* in terms of theology. "Praxis prepares the agenda, the repertory of questions, that theology is to address. Practices in general are not proofs of 'theological truths'."[172]

This epistemological critique of the principle that praxis is the criterion of truth invalidates as well its application to Christology and the implications which Knitter draws from a praxis-based christology

[169]Boff, *Theology and Praxis*, 199.

[170]Boff, *Theology and Praxis*, 199.

[171]Boff, *Theology and Praxis*, 200, 325, note 26.

[172]Boff, *Theology and Praxis*, 200.

for the question concerning the uniqueness of Jesus. 1) The truth of the Christian conviction that Jesus is God's final or normative revelation has as its criterion the foundational revelation attested in Scripture and interpreted in the tradition of the Church, not "the praxis of historical involvement."[173] 2) The method of liberation christology does *not* show why normative claims for Jesus are not possible at present. These claims are made on the basis of the historical reality of Christian revelation "deposited in the code of its founding interpretation."[174] This *is* sufficient to establish the normativity or finality of Jesus for Catholic theology. 3) and 4) A liberation christology which would be uncertain whether Jesus is normative would not be true to the *norma normans* of the foundational message which includes the confession that "Jesus is Lord," "which does not mean 'a lord' who can stand alongside competing gods and saviors. 'Lord' carries the authority of the one God of all humanity."[175]

5. Uniqueness and the Resurrection

Finally, Knitter argues that Jesus' resurrection from the dead does not imply the exclusive uniqueness of Jesus. On the basis of an interpretation of the disciples' original experience of the risen Jesus inspired mainly by E. Schillebeeckx, he argues that the experience may not be limited to the disciples of Jesus but is "essentially what countless men and women have felt in their experience of other archetypal religious leaders after the deaths of these leaders.[176]

The Easter experience of the original disciples of Jesus was a "revelation" or "conversion" experience. It was effected by the objective reality of grace mediated through "psychological realities and human experiences" in which "the productive remembrance of Jesus'

[173]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 196.

[174]Boff, *Theology and Praxis*, 325, note 26.

[175]Pheme Perkins, "Christianity and World Religions," 371, cf. above 33-35.

[176]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 200.

basic message" and the previous faith in Jesus as the eschatological prophet played an important role. "The early disciples found themselves amazingly reconverted and enabled to renew their faith in Jesus; he was still among them in a new, a transformed presence."[177] Though detailed suggestions by theologians like Schillebeeckx, D. Lane, H. Küng and J. Mackey concerning how this conversion experience occurred in the concrete differ, Knitter claims that "it is clear from these descriptions that such encounters were not essentially different from what Christians can and should experience today ... as they break bread, recall his story, live his message." In this interpretation, the accounts of the appearances in the gospels are viewed "as attempts to express and give more tangible form to these conversion experiences."[178]

Here again, concludes Knitter, is "a contemporary christological interpretation that makes room for the non-normative christology proposed by the theocentric model,"[179] for this conversion model of the resurrection leads to the further question: Must the experience behind the Easter stories be limited to an experience of Jesus? Or have the followers of other religious leaders had essentially the same conversion or faith-experience after their leader's deaths?[180]

Knitter gives Gautama, the Buddha, as an example and asks: "Did not his disciples undergo a further, a continued 'vocation received in faith', a personal transformation after his death? Have they not continued to sense his spirit, his real presence, in their midst?" He concedes that Buddhists did not speak of the resurrected Buddha. But that was because the interpretative model of resurrection from the dead was not available in their culture. Furthermore, the fact that the followers of other religious leaders "do not interpret their founders in terms of resurrection ... does not mean that nothing happened to these

[177]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 198.

[178]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 198-199.

[179]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 199.

[180]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 200.

founders after their death as must have happened to Jesus." They too "continue to live on in a transformed spiritual but real way."[181] Knitter's conclusion is that "the resurrection of Jesus ... does not necessarily imply 'one and only'."[182]

Critique of (5) Uniqueness and the Resurrection

In dependence on E. Schillebeeckx, Knitter interprets the disciples' experience of the risen Jesus as primarily a revelatory conversion experience. He conjectures that this would correspond to what the followers of other archetypal religious leaders experienced after their leaders' death.

It has been shown elsewhere that Schillebeeckx's interpretation is not supported by the New Testament texts, does not do justice to the tradition history and is untenable.[183] The very old catechetical summary of the heart of the gospel in 1 Cor. 15:3-5 and Paul's witness to his own experience show that this experience was a unique revelatory experience of, and encounter with, the risen and exalted Jesus as the beginning of the end-time saving presence of God.[184]

Furthermore, it is clear that for Paul the appearance of the risen Jesus was a unique event. "In 1 Cor. 9:1 Paul did not expect that those he addressed had made or could make in the future the same experience. Therefore his encounter with the risen one may not be exchanged with the coming to faith as every Christian can experience it."[185] Nor can it be said that the revelation-encounters with the risen

[181]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 200.

[182]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 200.

[183]Joseph J. Smith, "The Resurrection Appearances and the Origin of the Easter Faith," *Landas* 2 (1988), 204-237, esp. 220-232.

[184]Smith, "The Resurrection Appearances and the Origin of the Easter Faith," 216, cf. 208-220.

[185]Jacob Kremer, "Die Auferstehung Jesu Christi," in *Handbuch der Fundamentaltheologie*, Bd. 2: *Traktat Offenbarung*, eds. Walter Kern, Hermann

Jesus experienced by the original witnesses "were not essentially different from what Christians can and should experience today ... as they break bread, recall his story, live his message."[186] The original witnesses witness "to an experience which is strictly *sui generis* and is different from the experiences of religious enthusiasm or mysticism which can be stimulated and repeated."[187] A careful exegetical analysis of the appearance narratives sometimes used to show a similarity between the experiences of the original witnesses and experiences of Christians today (e.g., Lk. 24:13-31) reveals that they do not so much reproduce the experience of the first witnesses who have "seen" the Lord as mirror the experiences of the later Christians "of second hand" (Kierkegaard) of the later situation of the already existing community,[188] hence the similarity with experiences of present-day Christians.

Finally, Knitter betrays an inadequate understanding of the resurrection of Jesus when he suggests that the founders of other religions also "continue to live on in a transformed, spiritual, but real way" and concludes that the resurrection of Jesus does not necessarily imply "one and only."[189] The resurrection of Jesus was not experienced as resulting merely in a transformed spiritual life in the presence of God. It was experienced as exaltation of Jesus to permanent unity with God and a sharing in his transcendent power and functions. He was made Lord of the universe and permanent mediator of universal salvation and of the transforming Spirit.[190] Such an experience of the risen Jesus and the idea of resurrection it involves does necessarily imply "one and only."

Pottmeyer and Max Seckler (Freiburg: Herder, 1985), 184 (author's own translation).

[186]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 198-199.

[187]Rahner, *Foundations*, 277.

[188]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 132-133, 251-254.

[189]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 200.

[190]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 339-367, cf. below 62-65.

In this second stage of the development of his thought on Christianity and world religions, Paul Knitter has not been successful in his attempt to show that Christians should relinquish their claim to the "finality" or "normativity" of Jesus Christ. Precisely for the sake of honesty, the Christian must not abandon his claim that Christ is universally and definitively normative. To the contention of Knitter that the abandonment of this claim will benefit interreligious dialogue, Avery Dulles responds that, in fact, "for Christians antecedently to surrender their traditional claim might be injurious to the dialogue, since it might prevent them from making what is potentially their most important contribution."[191]

Stage III: A Liberation Theology of Religions

Most recently, Knitter has discovered the need to move beyond theocentrism. He finds that the evolution in Catholic theology from ecclesiocentrism to christocentrism to theocentrism is incomplete. The evolution is pressing on to another stage: from theocentrism to soteriocentrism (or, in biblical symbolism, kingdom-centrism).[192]

The move beyond theocentrism was provoked by valid criticism of theocentrism. Knitter confesses that this move takes seriously the criticisms justifiably made of theocentric theologies to the effect that in urging God as the common basis for dialogue, Christians implicitly but imperialistically impose their notion of Deity on other religions which (like Buddhism) may not even wish to speak of God or Transcendence.[193] G. D'Costa points out that Knitter and other

[191]Dulles, *Models of Revelation*, 190.

[192]Knitter, "Catholic Theology of Religions," 105; idem, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions," 187.

[193]Knitter, "Catholic Theology of Religions," 105; idem, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions," 184: "Cobb has also leveled some hard-hitting criticisms against John Hick's and my theocentric model for a Christian approach to other faiths showing quite convincingly, I must admit, that by proposing God, instead of the Church or Christ, as the common basis for dialogue, we are implicitly,

pluralists have no basis for claiming that there is "a common ground and goal of all religions" and that "the same God ... [is] animating all religions,"[194] since they deny that the revelation of God in Christ is universal *and normative.* "How can Knitter discern this 'same God' in all religions without normative revelation of God?"[195] In fact, John Hick, whom Knitter rightly called the "most radical" of pluralists, had previously made the shift away from theocentrism in reaction to the criticism "that it was a Christian God at the center of the universe of faiths which failed to accommodate non-theistic religions."[196]

If the need for a move beyond theocentrism was revealed by criticism, the direction of the move to soteriocentrism was influenced by liberation theology. Knitter explains that it is becoming clear how urgently the theology of religions, responding to the problem of religious pluralism, and the theology of liberation, responding to the problem of suffering and injustice, need each other and need to dialogue with each other. For liberation theology, this means that "a cross cultural, interreligious sharing of liberative theory and praxis is called for." Christian theology of liberation cannot remain closed to the "liberative and revolutionary potentials of non-Christian religions."[197]

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unconsciously, but still imperialistically imposing our notions of Deity or the Ultimate on other believers who, like many Buddhists, may not even wish to speak about God or who experience the Ultimate as Sunyata, which has nothing or little to do with what Christians experience and call God." Cf. John Cobb, *Beyond Dialogue: Towards a Mutual Transformation of Christianity and Buddhism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 41-44.

[194]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 208-209.

[195]D'Costa, "The Pluralist Paradigm in the Christian Theology of Religions," 216.

[196]D'Costa, "The Pluralist Paradigm in the Christian Theology of Religions." Cf. D'Costa, *Theology and Religious Pluralism*, 37, 39-40, 43-45. For this reason, D'Costa spoke of "Knitter's confusing classification of Hick as 'theocentric'" in Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 147 (D'Costa, *Theology and Religious Pluralism*, 50, note 93).

[197]Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions," 179-180, quoting Aloysius Pieris, "The Place of Non-Christian Religions and Cultures in the

For the theology of religions, this means that the realization is dawning that dialogue among religions which "does not address, as a primary concern, the poverty and oppression that infest our world" is not authentic religious dialogue.[198]

In an article outlining a liberation theology of religions, Knitter explains how the principles and guidelines of liberation theology can benefit a pluralist theology of religions.[199] They can make two contributions: 1) provide a basis for a pluralistic, non-relativistic dialogue between religions, and 2) enable the theology of religions to develop a pluralist christology without surrendering the content and power of Christian tradition or witness.

1. Basis for a Pluralistic, Non-relativistic Dialogue

There are three ways in which the methodology of liberation theology can promote interreligious dialogue which is genuinely pluralistic, i.e., allow all participants an equally valid voice and equal opportunity to be heard and understood, without reducing it to a relativism which makes evaluative judgements impossible.

a) To interpret and hear the word of God, liberation theologians make use of a "hermeneutics of suspicion." They are suspicious of the ease with which interpretation of scripture and formulations of doctrine become ideology—a means of securing one's own interests at the expense of someone else's. Such ideologized interpretations and formulations need detection and revision if God's word is to be heard without distortion.

Evolution of Third World Theology," in *Irruption of the Third World: Challenge* to *Theology*, eds. Virginia Fabella and Sergio Torres (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1983), 113-114. Also cf. Knitter, "Catholic Theology of Religions," 104.

[198]Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions," 180; idem, "Catholic Theology of Religions," 104.

[199]Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions," 178-200; idem, "Catholic Theology of Religions," 104-106 provides a brief summary of the main points of the former article.

The adoption of such a hermeneutic would enable theologians of religions to detect "how much traditional theology of religions, especially its christological basis [has] served to cloak or condone an unconscious, ideological desire to maintain superiority, or to dominate and control, or to devalue other traditions culturally or religiously." In this way, it will lead to the revision of traditional models that have, perhaps unconsciously, led to unethical results and will help "clear away ideological obstacles to more effective dialogue."[200]

b) Secondly, Knitter is convinced that liberation theology's preferential option for (or the hermeneutical privilege of) the poor can form the effective presupposition and foundation for interreligious dialogue as the common starting point, common approach or common context. "Instead of searching for 'one God' or 'one ultimate' or a 'common essence' or a 'mystical center' within all religions, we can recognize a *shared locus of religious experience* now available to all religions of the world."[201] This shared locus of religious experience is "their common concern and different efforts to promote the 'salvation' or liberation of all persons, especially those most poor and suffering."[202] This means that the basis or starting point for interreligious dialogue, the condition of possibility for mutual understanding and cooperation, is not how they are related to and conceive God but to what extent they are promoting *Soteria* (salvation)—human welfare. This is what requires the move beyond theocentrism to soteriocentrism.[203]

c) A practical advantage of the soteriocentric approach to dialogue—the preferential option for the poor—is that it provides religions with a starting point for acquiring, through liberative praxis, soteriocentric criteria for grading themselves. Knitter concedes that

[200]Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions," 182-183.

[201]Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions," 185-186.

[202]Knitter, "Catholic Theology of Religions," 104.

[203]Knitter, "Catholic Theology of Religions," 104; idem, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions," 187-188.

each religion or tradition will have its own understanding of what *Soteria* and liberation entail. But in the soteriocentric approach, it is explicitly recognized that "before the mystery of *Soteria*, no mediator or symbol system is absolute." This means that "the perspective on *Soteria* given by any one mediator is always open to clarification, completion, perhaps correction by the viewpoints of other mediators." In other words, what is absolute is the kingdom and its justice. "And although Christians understand and serve that kingdom *through* Christ, it is in seeking first the kingdom and its justice that all else will be added to them, including a clearer, perhaps corrected, understanding of that kingdom *and* of Christ."[204] This leads to the second major contribution of a liberation theology of religions: the clarification of the understanding of Christ.

2. Liberation Theology of Religions and the Uniqueness of Christ

Knitter contends that in the interest of a genuinely pluralistic dialogue which precludes pre-established absolutist positions, Christians must revise or even reject their traditional understanding of Jesus Christ as the final, definitive, normative revelation of God. Can Christians do this and remain Christians? He proposes four ways in which a liberation theology of religions can provide an answer.

a) "Liberation theology insists that *praxis* is both the *origin* and the *confirmation* of theory or *doctrine.* All Christian beliefs and truth claims must grow out of and be reconfirmed in the praxis or lived experience of these truths."[205] Knitter contends that, applied to a theology of religions, this means that Christians can claim that Jesus is God's final and normative revelation for all religions *only* in and through the *praxis of dialogue* with other religions. It is only in such an encounter that the normativity of Christ can be experienced and confirmed. But since

[204]Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions," 188-190.

[205]Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions," 191.

such a praxis of interreligious dialogue is only in its initial stages, this experience has not yet been made. Consequently, Christians will have to admit that at present "it is *impossible* to make claims of finality and normativity for Christ or Christianity."[206] The practical consequence is that Christians may participate in dialogue with other religions without making these traditional claims.

b) Knitter asserts that another principle of liberation theology—*the primacy of orthopraxis over orthodoxy*—assures Christians that if claims about the finality of Christ/Christianity are not possible, neither are they *necessary*, for applied in a soteriocentric liberation theology of religions, the principle means that "the primary concern should not be 'right belief' about the uniqueness of Christ, but the 'right-practice', with other religions, of furthering the kingdom and its *Soteria*."[207] Knitter contends that orthodoxy becomes a pressing concern only when it is necessary for orthopraxis—for carrying out the preferential option for the poor and for promoting the kingdom. But he is convinced that Christians do not need orthodox clarity that Jesus is the "only" or the "final" or the "universal" savior in order to experience and fully commit themselves to the liberating truth of his message. "Not those who proclaim 'only Lord, only Lord', but those who *do* the will of the Father, will enter the kingdom (Mt. 7:21-23)."[208]

c) Knitter points out that the possibility, described earlier, of using the preferential option for the poor and liberative praxis as means of acquiring soteriocentric criteria for "grading the religions" has applications to christology. They provide the means to discern "whether and *how much* other religious figures may be genuine liberators and 'saviors'," and the means "to critically examine and possibly revise

[206]Knitter, "Catholic Theology of Religions," 105; cf. idem, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions," 191-192.

[207]Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions," 192.

[208]Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions," 192-193.

the traditional understanding of the uniqueness of Christ."[209] Knitter suggests that through such an ethical hermeneutics, reasons might be found to affirm Christ as a unique, normative liberator—as one who unifies and fulfills all efforts towards a full humanity, or, he concedes, it may be discovered that other religions and religious figures offer a means and vision of liberation equal to that of Jesus. "Jesus would be unique together with other unique liberators—which would be a cause for Christian rejoicing: 'anyone who is not against us is with us' (Mk. 9:40)"[210] But Knitter reminds us that according to a soteriocentric liberation theology of religions, the most important thing is to seek first the kingdom and its justice, not the discernment about uniqueness and finality.[211]

d) Finally, Knitter believes that a liberation theology of religions can help in overcoming another obstacle encountered by those who are exploring possibilities of a non-normative, non-absolutist understanding of Christ. The reception by the faithful remains a decisive criterion for the validity and fittingness of a new understanding of Christ as "one together with others" in a relationship of "complementary uniqueness." It is precisely the perceived conflict between the non-absolutist understanding of Christ and the "sense of the faithful" which motivates theologians like Monika Hellwig, Frans Josef van Beeck, Avery Dulles and Hans Küng from endorsing a pluralist theology of religions.[212]

Knitter suggests that liberation theology can be of service in this situation. First of all, liberation theologians view themselves not only as teachers and learners in the community but, where need be, as prophets who challenge, prod, sharpen, and even transform the sense of the faithful. He has found that, especially in this question of the

[209]Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions," 193.

[210]Knitter, "Catholic Theology of Religions," 106.

[211]Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions," 194.

[212]Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions," 194-195.

uniqueness of Christ, the fears and hesitations of congregations can be overcome—"indeed that many of the faithful are happy someone is finally pushing and challenging them."[213]

But secondly, the basic epistemological principle of liberation theology that orthopraxis holds a primacy over orthodoxy "is also a workable pastoral tool for mediating the non-absolutist christologies to the ecclesia." An understanding of this principle will enable the Christian people to realize that in "receiving" the non-absolute interpretations of Jesus "they are not only remaining faithful to the witness of the New Testament and tradition, but are also being challenged to an even deeper commitment to Christ and his gospel." Knitter suspects that the "sense" of most Christian faithful, who are in touch with their own experience through a liberative praxis of their faith, will resonate with the claim that the right practice of following Jesus and working for his kingdom is more important for Christian identity than is the right knowledge concerning the nature of God or of Jesus himself. He argues further that the psychology of love and commitment "would seem to suggest" that the deeper and more secure one's commitment to a particular path or person is, the more one is open to the beauty or truth of other paths and persons, that others will be more readily convinced by Christians who give simple witness to how much their savior has actually done for them than by Christians who insist that "our savior is bigger than yours."[214]

Thirdly, "recognition of the primacy of orthopraxis over orthodoxy can also be used pastorally to enable Christian believers to understand the nature of New Testament language and what it means to be faithful to that language." Knitter contends that the power and purpose of biblical language is, first of all, to call forth a way of life rather than a body of belief, that the christological language and titles of the New

[213]Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions," 195, referring to Paul Knitter, "The Impact of World Religions on Academic and Ecclesial Theology," *Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings* (1985), 160-165.

[214]Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions," 195-196.

Testament did not have as their primary purpose to offer definitive ontological statements about the person and work of Jesus but to enable men and women to feel the power and attraction of Jesus' vision and then to "go and do likewise." He does not deny that the New Testament communities were trying to say something real about Jesus, that they were making cognitive claims about him. "But these claims were not the primary intent; they were in a sense, means to an end—or better calls to discipleship."[215]

In 1985, Knitter distinguished New Testament talk from philosophical language by calling it "survival" and "love" language.[216] In 1987, he claimed that it is more accurate and pastorally effective to call the New Testament claims about Jesus "action language." This means that "he was called 'one and only' or 'only begotten', not primarily to give us definitive theologico-philosophical statements, and not *primarily* to exclude others, but rather to urge the action or practice of total commitment to his vision and way." Knitter is confident that *if* Christians today can continue to follow Christ and work for the kingdom *without* the traditional "one and only language," then they are still holding to the core content of the original message. "If recognizing the possibility of other saviors or mediators does not impede this praxis, then it is compatible with Christian identity and tradition."[217]

Knitter even claims it is arguable that today, such a recognition of others is necessary for remaining faithful to the original witness about Jesus. "Theologians who are exploring a pluralist theology of religions and a non-absolutist christology are doing so ... because ... they want to be faithful to the original message of the Nazarean—that to which Jesus always subordinated himself: the kingdom of love, unity and justice."[218]

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[215]Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions," 196.

[216]Knitter, *No Other Name?*, 182-186.

[217]Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions," 196.

[218]Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions," 196-197.

Critique of Stage III: A Liberation Theology of Religions

Paul Knitter is not alone in calling for dialogue among religions which addresses, "as a primary concern, the poverty and oppression that infest our world."[219] For example, the Theological Advisory Commission of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences has recommended that Christian Churches "come together with other religions to promote and to defend human and spiritual values such as solidarity with the poor, justice and peace."[220]

Furthermore, there is no reason to deny that the valid principles of liberation theology, critically applied, are capable of promoting interreligious dialogue and serving as a basis for dialogue. But there is no valid reason why "Christians must revise or even reject their traditional understanding of Jesus Christ as God's final, definitive, normative voice."[221] The reasons proposed by Knitter in Stage II have proven unconvincing. The reasons he draws from a liberation theology of religions are equally invalid.

1) The praxis of dialogue with other religions is *not* the only way Christians can claim that Jesus is God's final and normative revelation for all. As previously stated,[222] the truth of the Christian conviction that Jesus is God's final or normative revelation has as its criterion the foundational revelation, "'deposited' in the code of its founding interpretation,"[223] and "for the whole of the New Testament—like

[219]Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions," 180.

[220]"Seven Theses on Interreligious Dialogue: An Essay in Pastoral Theological Reflection," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 13:3 (July 1989), 110.

[221]Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions," 191.

[222]Cf. above 43-44.

[223]Boff, *Theology and Praxis*, 200, 375, note 26.

it or not—Jesus is normative and definitive."[224] As we have already explained, this is precisely the content and meaning of the ancient confession of faith: "Jesus is Lord" (Rom. 10:9).[225]

2) Knitter's argument from another principle of liberation theology—the primacy of orthopraxis over orthodoxy—is also invalid. The unexplained formula is ambiguous. It is imperative not to mix up two levels of thought. On the level of *fides qua*, the subjective, living, experiential side of faith relating to salvation, faith is only authentic to the extent that it leads to action. Believing but failing to act accordingly reveals that one does not really believe. Here the criterion of orthopraxis is essential and internal to faith. Here the text quoted by Knitter finds its true setting: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord', shall enter the Kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Mt. 7:21). On this level of *fides qua*, the principle is correct: orthopraxis has the primacy over (mere) orthodoxy.

But on the level of *fides quae* (or the content of faith) relating to theology, the principle would be erroneous. Action cannot in and of itself be the criterion of truth or offer criteria for truth, for it "supposes a value-option and a reading of history. Orthopraxy supposes an intellectual action and can vaunt no superiority over reflection."[226] William J. Hill points out that praxis can provide the motivation and context for Christian thinking that is transformative and emancipatory but he denies that "it can formally determine that critical thinking on the second-order level that seeks meaning and truth."[227] C. Boff

[224]Küng, "Towards an Ecumenical Theology of Religions," 122, cf. 123.

[225]Cf. above 33-35, 45-47.

[226]Jean M. Domenach, "L'histoire n'est pas notre absolu," *Lumière et Vie* 23 (1974), 152 (author's own translation).

[227]William J. Hill, "Theology," in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, eds. Joseph

concludes that "it is only when a mistaken or 'warped' relationship is introduced between [the] two levels [of the theoretical and the practical] that orthodoxy is disqualified in favor of orthopraxy."[228]

3) This presupposed, Knitter underestimates the importance of "right belief" about the uniqueness of Christ for the "right practice" of promoting the Kingdom and its salvation. Church doctrines and dogmas are sets of meanings and values informing individual and collective Christian living.[229] The New Testament witnesses to Jesus' constitutive role in the inauguration and consummation of the Kingdom of God and its salvation. Jesus' self-emptying life of obedience to God's will and service of his brothers and sisters in need was the revelation of the historical in-breaking of the Rule of God and its salvation, and the exaltation of the Crucified as Lord of heaven and earth made his self-emptying love into the standard and definition of meaning for all humanity. The witness concerning the enthronement of Jesus as Lord "confronts all of humanity with the claim that in the life-praxis of Jesus for one and all, there is question of the truth and meaning of their own life: only such love ... remains and only what is done from out of such love remains forever (1 Cor. 13:8)."[230] The confession of Jesus as Lord is a summons to discipleship as *imitatio Christi* for the promotion of the Kingdom and for the historical mediation of salvation after the pattern of Jesus' life for God and for others.

Moreover, in the light of this confession, the disciple knows that he is now empowered for such discipleship. "Jesus is Lord" means that the Crucified has been taken up into the mystery of God in such a way that he is universally active in the power of this mystery effecting

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Komonchak, Mary Collins and Dermot Lane (Wilmington: M. Glazier, 1987), 1018. Cf. above 42-44.

[228]Boff, *Theory and Praxis*, 199.

[229]Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972), 311-320.

[230]Kessler, *Sucht den Lebenden*, 353.

the salvation of all mankind,[231] and drawing all humanity toward the final transformation in which God will be all in all. Jesus as Lord is revealed as the active source of the Spirit capacitating men and women for the service of the Kingdom by faith working through love after the pattern of Jesus' life for God and for others.

Jesus Christ, the one and only incarnate Son of God, has already revealed the salvation of the Kingdom as the gift of God's self-communication in the Son and in the Spirit, and has revealed as well the response to which it summons and empowers believers. Dialogue with other religions may help clarify how this life for God and for others can be concretized in new circumstances. But there is no reason to think that it will eliminate the normative nature of Jesus Christ's revelation of the Kingdom and its salvation.

4) In the light of Knitter's failure to invalidate the core New Testament witness to Jesus Christ as the final and normative revelation of God and his salvation, his introduction of the *sensus fidelium*,[232] the effect of the sense of faith in the community of the faithful, into the discussion is unfortunate. In its dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Vatican II described the sense of faith as a gift of grace given by the Holy Spirit and listed four effects: "By this sense of faith, God's people accepts ... the very Word of God (cf. 1 Thess. 2:13). It clings without fail to the faith once delivered to the saints (cf. Jude 3), penetrates it more deeply by accurate insights, and applies it more thoroughly to life" (article twelve).[233]

This text gives a central place to the ability to persevere in fidelity to

[231]Wilhelm Thüsing, *Die neutestamentlichen Theologien und Jesus Christus* I (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1981), 130-131.

[232]"The term *sensus fidelium* (sense or mind of the faithful) ... generally has an objective meaning, referring ... to what is believed" (Francis A. Sullivan, *Magisterium* [New York: Paulist Press, 1983], 23).

[233]*The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter Abbott (New York: Herder & Herder, 1966), 29-30.

what is original, recognizing and rejecting false innovations contrary to faith. Consequently, the promotion of "non-absolute views of Christ" at variance with the core message of normative New Testament witness to Christian faith in order to challenge the faithful and transform the sense of the faithful can hardly be the "prophetic" task Knitter would have us believe. Knitter may have found believers who are "happy someone is finally pushing and challenging them" to overcome fears and hesitations in the question of the uniqueness of Christ. But is this reaction of believers due to a sharpening of their sense of faith or to the influence of historical and socio-cultural conditioning and the tendency of fallen human nature to conform to the cultural milieu? "Christians are members of the Church, the body of Christ, but they are also members of secular society. For better or for worse, everyone is affected by the ebb and flow of public opinion." Today, powerful influences are the habit of comparative thinking and the experience of religious pluralism. In the present socio-cultural setting, it has become embarrassing even for Christians to claim that Jesus Christ is "decisive," "unique," "normative," or "final." "Those who fail to criticize the prevailing axioms" and pre-suppositions "in the light of the Gospel are in constant danger of tailoring the Gospel to fit the accepted postulates of their own social group."[234] The working of the supernatural sense of faith must be ascertained by responsible discernment.

Furthermore, the misunderstood principle of the primacy of orthopraxis over orthodoxy cannot be a valid tool for promoting the genuine sense of the faithful concerning Christian identity. The Jesus who on the level of *fides qua* said, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord', shall enter the Kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father, who is in heaven" (Mt. 7:21) is the same Jesus who on the level of *fides quae* asked, "Who do you say that I am?" (Mk. 8:29), for the revelation of Jesus Christ as divine Lord and Son of God communicates to the Christian a very definite orientation to action. As previously stated, it effectively summons to discipleship as *imitatio Christi*, and

[234]Avery Dulles, "Sensus Fidelium," *America* 155:12 (November 1, 1986), 242.

because he confesses that the Son "reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature" (Heb. 1:3), the disciple knows from Jesus' life and death that "God is love" (1 Jn. 4:8.16) who by nature promotes the good and opposes all evil, that therefore the believer must be an imitator of God (Eph. 5:1) and strive to promote the good and oppose evil, injustice and suffering in all its forms. "This conception of God, which is not given to us as the result of a universal concept of God as found in the history of religions ... appears from and in Jesus Christ"[235] "who as the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father ... has made him known" (Jn. 1:18). The Christian commitment flows from this knowledge of who Jesus is and what he has done and draws from this knowledge its inspiration and dynamism.

CONCLUSION

Neither in stage I, nor in stage II, nor in stage III of his development has Paul Knitter given convincing reason why "Christians must ... revamp or even reject their traditional understanding of Jesus Christ as God's final, definitive, normative voice."[236] Hans Küng protests that what is proclaimed today as "brand new" teaching often proves to be the old teaching from the liberal Protestant stable. He points out that theologians who have abandoned Jesus' normativity and finality (conclusiveness) and have placed him on the level of other prophets alongside others (Christ together with other religions or other revealers, saviors, Christs) have also lost all criteria for the discernment of spirits. He affirms that the protest of Karl Barth and "dialectical theology" (Emil Brunner, Rudolf Bultmann and Paul Tillich) against such liberalism was a necessary corrective. "To go back in this direction is no progress."[237]

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[235]Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ: The Experience of Jesus as Lord* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 778-779.

[236]Knitter, "Toward a Liberation Theology of Religions," 191.

[237]Küng, "Towards an Ecumenical Theology of Religions," 121-122.

Of course, the absoluteness of the Christian revelation in Jesus Christ, in the sense of its unsurpassability and definitiveness, is a truth of faith. It is not an objective, universally valid truth of reason perceptible to all. However, "holding fast to this two thousand years old conviction of truth—without anguish or apologetic concern, but on good ground, in the way that Jews, Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists do to theirs—is in no way identical with some theological 'imperialism' and 'neo-colonialism', which denies other religions their truth and rejects other prophets and seers."[238]

Hans Küng contends that for a nuanced answer to the question of the truth of religions, one must distinguish the view from without and the view from within. Viewed from outside or from the perspective of comparative religion, "there are various *true religions*" which, despite their ambivalence, conform to certain "basically defined general (ethical and religious) criteria." They represent "different ways of salvation (with different ways of representing salvation) to the one goal." They partially overlap and "can ... enrich one another." Küng affirms that the dialogue between these religions by no means demands the giving up of the standpoint of faith.[239]

Viewed from within, "from the viewpoint of the believing Christian orientating him—or herself by the New Testament ... there is a *true religion:* Christianity insofar as it witnesses to one, true God as he has declared himself in Jesus Christ." Küng observes that the one, true religion can let others be: as religions *true up to a point* ("conditionally"—or some similar term—true).[240]

Avery Dulles points out that the present encounter of the religions can have positive significance for the interpretation of what is revealed in Christ. "We cannot accurately predict what we may learn from the dialogue that seems to be getting under way." But he affirms that

[238]Küng, "Towards an Ecumenical Theology of Religions," 122.

[239]Küng, "Towards an Ecumenical Theology of Religions," 122.

[240]Küng, "Towards an Ecumenical Theology of Religions," 122.

there is no reason to think it will diminish the revelatory importance of Jesus Christ. "It may well be that in the light of other revelatory symbols, the universal and abiding significance of Christ will be more strikingly manifested."[241] The revelation of the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ assures us that Jesus Christ is the *universale concretum*, i.e., "the concrete realisation of that, toward which all reality is striving."[242] "For in him the whole fullness of the divinity dwells bodily" (Col. 2:9). But his universal significance is still being disclosed to us "in the real contexts of ongoing history ... in the encounter of the gospel with the world religions."[243] As the unsurpassable "real symbol" of God's self-communication to the world in absolute love, Jesus Christ possesses permanent and universal significance. But "even though it already is the supreme and definitive self-disclosure of God, the Christ symbol cannot be adequately appreciated for our time, except in the context of many other symbols, including those of extra-biblical religions."[244]

The Christian, then, will approach dialogue with other religions with both commitment and openness: commitment to Jesus Christ as the supreme and definitive self-disclosure of God, openness to the many and various ways in which God has spoken in the non-Christian religions and openness to the light shining there that can both illuminate new depths in the supreme revelation of God in Jesus Christ and receive greater clarity in his light.

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[241]Dulles, *Models of Revelation*, 191-192.

[242]Karl Lehmann, "Absolutheit des Christentums als philosophisches und theologisches Problem," in Kasper, *Absolutheit des Christentums*, 37-38 (author's own translation).

[243]Carl Braaten, "The Uniqueness and Universality of Jesus Christ," in *Mission Trends No. 5: Faith Meets Faith*, eds. Gerald Anderson and Thomas Stransky (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 86.

[244]Dulles, *Models of Revelation*, 192.

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LITURGIAM AUTHENTICAM
The Authority of the Vulgate and the Neo-Vulgate*

Joseph J. Smith, S.J.

The Executive Board of the Catholic Biblical Association of America contends that *Liturgiam authenticam* (LA), issued in March 2001 by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, "appears to misinterpret the authority of the Neo-Vulgate." The Board states: "*Liturgiam authenticam* attributes massive authority to the Neo-Vulgate in nos. 24, 33, 37, 41a and 43."[1]

Let us take LA 37 as an example. It reads:

> If the biblical translation from which the Lectionary is composed exhibits readings that differ from those set forth in the Latin liturgical text, it should be borne in mind that the Neo-Vulgate edition is the point of reference as regards the delineation of the canonical text.

In support of the above statement that "the Neo-Vulgate edition is the point of reference as regards the delineation of the canonical

*Response to Father Chupungco's lecture at Faculty-Student Dialogue at Loyola School of Theology, Loyola Heights, Quezon City (January 25, 2002).

[1]Catholic Biblical Association of America (CBAA), "To the Prelates of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops," http://cba.cua.edu/usccbdoc.cfm.

text," *Liturgiam authenticam*, in note 32, appeals to: 1) two decrees of the Council of Trent, and 2) the Apostolic Constitution *Scripturarum thesaurus* of John Paul II promulgating the Neo-Vulgate. Our discussion, therefore, will center on these documents.

I. THE COUNCIL OF TRENT AND THE VULGATE

Let us first consider LA's appeal to Trent. By this appeal, LA appears to be attempting to impart to the Neo-Vulgate the authority which Saint Jerome's Vulgate is alleged to possess according to the Council of Trent. LA refers to two decrees solemnly promulgated in the fourth session of the Council on April 8, 1546: Decree on Sacred Books and on Traditions to be Received,[2] and Decree concerning the Vulgate edition of the Bible and concerning the Manner of Interpreting Sacred Scripture.[3] The Vulgate is mentioned in each decree. Is it given the role of "the point of reference as regards the delineation of the canonical text"?

A. Decree on Sacred Books and on Traditions

In the conclusion to this decree, which lists the books of the Old and New Testaments recognized by the Council, Trent affirms:

> If anyone does not accept all these books in their entirety, with all their parts, as they are being read in the Catholic church and are contained in the ancient Vulgate Latin edition, as sacred and canonical ... *anathema sit.*[4]

Here the Vulgate, at first sight, might appear to be given a role as "the point of reference as regards the delineation of the canonical

[2]DS 1501-1505, ND 210-213.

[3]DS 1506-1508, ND 214-215.

[4]DS 1504, ND 213.

text." The books are to be received "with all their parts ... as sacred and canonical." A "part" is a notable portion of some importance, either in size (length) or in doctrine (content). But how is an authentic part to be identified? In answer to this question, the Council specified: "as they are being read in the Catholic church and are contained in the ancient Vulgate Latin edition."

How is this specification of the Council to be interpreted? Is the Vulgate given the role of "the point of reference as regards the delineation of the canonical text"? Does it mean that every part of the Vulgate is canonical by the very fact of being part of the Vulgate? The answer: probably not. Many of the better theologians maintain that Trent here lays down a double criterion: 1) presence in the Vulgate, and 2) acceptance by the tradition of the entire Church.

L. Venard holds that these criteria should be regarded as complementary rather than as totally distinct and separable; both must be fulfilled.[5] Insertion in the Vulgate is the clearest sign of the constant usage of the text in question in the Latin church, but it is not of itself sufficient to certify the canonicity of a text beyond all question. Before a final conclusion could be drawn, one would have to consult the liturgical and theological traditions of Eastern as well as Western Christendom.

Conclusion to A. In this first decree, the Vulgate is given a role as *a* "point of reference as regards the delineation of the canonical text." But it is not *the* point of reference. Presence in the Vulgate is one criterion of canonicity but it is not sufficient by itself to certify the canonicity of a text beyond all question.

B. Decree Concerning the Vulgate

In its fourth session (April 8, 1546), the Council of Trent also

[5]L. Venard, "Vulgate," in *Dictionnaire de Theologie Catholique* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1909), cols. 3474-3492.

issued a Decree concerning the Vulgate Edition of the Bible. The council affirmed:

> Moreover, because the same Holy Council thought it very useful to the Church if it were known which, of all the Latin editions of the sacred books now in circulation is to be recognized as the authentic version, it declares and decrees: This same ancient Vulgate version which has been approved by its long-continued use for so many centuries in the Church is to be regarded as the authentic translation in public readings, disputations, sermons and expositions, and let no one dare or presume to reject it on any grounds.[6]

An authoritative interpretation of this tridentine decree has been given by Pope Pius XII in the encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (DAS). In DAS 21, the pope explains that Trent's decree, "that all should use as authentic" the Vulgate Latin version, applies only to the Latin church and to the public use of the same Scriptures. It does not detract in any way from the authority and value of the original texts, for at Trent "there was no question . . . of these texts, but of the Latin versions, which were in circulation at that time." Of these Latin versions, the Council "rightly declared to be preferable that [version] which 'had been approved by its long-continued use for so many centuries in the Church'."

Therefore, concludes the pope,

> this special authority or, as they say, authenticity of the Vulgate was not affirmed by the Council particularly for critical reasons, but rather because of its legitimate use in the churches throughout so many centuries (DAS 21).

By this use, the Vulgate "is shown, in the sense in which the Church has understood and understands it, to be free from any error whatever in matters of faith and morals." As a consequence, the Vulgate "may be quoted safely and without fear of error in disputations, in lectures and in preaching." Its authenticity, therefore, "is not specified primarily as critical but rather as juridical."

[6]DS 1506, ND 214.

In DAS 22, Pope Pius XII explains:

> Wherefore this authority of the Vulgate in matters of doctrine by no means prevents—nay rather today it almost demands—either the corroboration and confirmation of this same doctrine by the original texts or the having recourse on any and every occasion to the aid of these same texts, by which the correct meaning of the Sacred Letters is everywhere daily made more clear and evident. Nor is it forbidden by the decree of the Council of Trent to make translation into the vulgar tongue, even directly from the original texts themselves, for the use and benefit of the faithful and for the better understanding of the divine word....

Conclusion to B. Trent's decree concerning the Vulgate edition does not claim for the Vulgate a critical authority or authenticity, nor does it forbid the making of translations directly from the original texts themselves.

Conclusion to Part I

The two decrees of Trent cannot be used to support the claim that the Neo-Vulgate is "the point of reference as regards the delineation of the sacred text"—as LA 37 attempts to do.

II. SCRIPTURARUM THESAURUS

The final document LA appeals to in support of its statement that the Neo-Vulgate is "the point of reference as regards the delineation of the sacred text" is the Apostolic Constitution *Scripturarum thesaurus* (ST) of Pope John Paul II authorizing the publication of the Neo-Vulgate.[7]

The Executive Board of the Catholic Biblical Association of America affirms that the true nature and purpose of the Neo-Vulgate can be learned from this constitution and from the interpretative article by Bishop A.L. Descamps, Secretary of the Pontifical Biblical

[7]AAS 71 (April 25, 1979), 558-559.

Commission.[8] But the Board contends that there is no basis either in the Apostolic Constitution or in Bishop Descamps's interpreting article "for making the Neo-Vulgate an authority for all translators of the Bible for liturgical purposes."[9] What do these documents say?

ST promulgated a new Vulgate of the sacred books. In no. 7 of his article, Bishop Descamps summarizes the historical background of the Neo-Vulgate to clarify its original purpose. Vatican II (*Dei Verbum* 22) set in motion a new revision of the Latin Psalter for the purpose of liturgical use. According to Vatican II, the Hebrew text would be taken as the basis, while at the same time account would be taken of Christian Latin (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 91).

But before the closing of the Council, Paul VI instituted the Pontifical Commission for the Neo-Vulgate and gave it the mission of extending *to all of Scripture* the project initiated by the Council *for the Psalter.* The new translation was to be made in the spirit indicated by Vatican II, and it would be destined in particular for liturgical use.

In 1970-1971, the entire New Testament was published. In 1976-1977, the entire Old Testament was published in a number of volumes with critical notes justifying the manuscript readings adopted. Finally, in 1977, the two Testaments received a definitive edition and were ready for promulgation by ST.

Essential Characteristics of the Neo-Vulgate

Bishop Descamps explains that the essential characteristics of the Neo-Vulgate flow from three great principles:[10]

1) The translators start from the *critical text* of the Vulgate, such as it results especially from the labors of the abbey of Saint Jerome

[8]Albert L. Descamps, "La Nouvelle Vulgate," *Esprit et Vie* 89 (1979), 598-603 (all translations from this source are the author's own).

[9]CBAA, "To the Prelates of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops."

[10]Descamps, "La Nouvelle Vulgate," 602.

in Urbe. In 1907, Pius X had created a pontifical commission for the publication of a critically-assured text of the Vulgate. In 1933, at the initiative of Pius XI, the Benedictine Abbey of Saint Jerome *in Urbe* was founded expressly to take over the work of the commission and to bring it to a successful conclusion. From 1926-1978, inclusive, the Old Testament was published to Ezekiel.

2) The translators took this text as the basis of their translation; that is to say they only departed from it in order to align this text with the original Hebrew or Greek when the Vulgate was not in conformity with them. This second principle flowed from the deliberate will to value highly a Latin deeply-anchored in the Christian tradition, a Latin to which our modern translations themselves are greatly indebted, often without our knowing it.

3) To detect the deviations of the critical Vulgate from the originals, the translators have compared the critical Vulgate with the critical text of the Hebrew Old Testament and of the Greek New Testament. In regard to the critical text of the Hebrew Old Testament, the principle which obtains is that of the primacy of the Hebrew over the Septuagint, following the line of choice made by Saint Jerome himself. Moreover, since Jerome did not translate certain deuterocanonical books of the Old Testament, the Neo-Vulgate, according to Bishop Descamps, has made here a particularly important contribution. It did this by making use of the best critical editions of these books. In sum: the Neo-Vulgate is a synthesis of both critical requirements and respect for the Latin of the Church.

It is to be noted, however, that the Executive Board of the Catholic Biblical Association of America is very critical of some of the deuterocanonical books of the Neo-Vulgate. It points out that the text of the Wisdom of Solomon is so bad in the Neo-Vulgate that one specialist has recommended that ecclesiastical authority recall it.[11] Concerning the Old Latin, which is essentially the textual basis

[11]Giuseppe Scarpat, "Osservazioni sul testo della Sapientia Nella Nova Vulgata," *Rivista Biblica* 35 (1987), 187-194.

for Sirach in the Neo-Vulgate, Alexander A. de Lella, O.F.M., of the Catholic University of America, an authority on this book, has affirmed that it

> has more doublets, variants, glosses, and interpolations than any book of the Latin Bible ... double and even triple renderings, additions, transpositions, Christian reworkings, and a few omissions as well.[12]

As a consequence, the Executive Board of the Catholic Biblical Association of America expresses its concern that LA 37 requires translators to use the Neo-Vulgate as the textual basis for the deuterocanonical books.

Import of the Neo-vulgate in the Present Situation

In no. 8 of his interpretative article, Bishop Descamps attempts to clarify the import of the Neo-Vulgate in the present situation and the import of its promulgation by ST (which, he admits, "is not so easy to explain").[13]

While the Commission for the Neo-Vulgate was carrying out its work of preparing a new Latin translation of all Scripture, destined in particular for liturgical use, an unforeseeable event occurred which went beyond the premises posed by Vatican II liturgical matters. Paul VI allowed the use of the vernacular to be generalized, both for the missal and for the breviary. What, then, is the import of the Neo-Vulgate in the light of the introduction of the vernacular in the reading of the Bible and in the liturgy? ST, according to Bishop Descamps, provided three important indications in this regard:[14]

1) The first is that the Neo-Vulgate is destined for liturgical

[12]Patrick Skehan and Alexander di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira* (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 57, 60.

[13]Descamps, "La Nouvelle Vulgate," 598.

[14]Descamps, "La Nouvelle Vulgate," 602-603.

use. It is true that, in fact, Latin now has scarcely any place in the liturgy, especially in the biblical readings and in the mass. But its use continues to be permitted and is more actual in the office (abbeys, chapters, etc.).

2) The second indication of the Constitution is important. The Neo-Vulgate "will be able to serve as reference for translations in vernacular languages destined for liturgical and pastoral use." Bishop Descamps comments:

> It seems we can comment on this brief passage as follows. The gigantic work which consists in making, throughout the whole world, biblical translations in living language for liturgical and pastoral use, is far from being completed; at least the actual results are still perfectible. But in the future improvement of such texts, one can think that the Neo-Vulgate will be a good instrument for this task from the fact that it is, at the same time, faithful to the originals and readable by a numerous category of persons who, without knowing Hebrew or Greek, understand Latin sufficiently. This is the case, despite everything, of priests as a body, and of a good number of lay persons who can be called, for example, to collaborate in the making of new translations in living language.[15]

3) A third use of the Neo-Vulgate is indicated by the Constitution.

> One can think that it will serve as a foundation on which biblical studies may be able to base themselves—especially where specialized libraries are accessible with great difficulty.[16]

Bishop Descamps comments:

> Let us take the risk of making this objective a little more precise. The ignorance of Hebrew or Greek is not an obstacle to a serious study of Scripture. Excellent translations made in the principal living languages furnish here more than one contribution. But in relation to these translations themselves, the Neo-Vulgate retains, from a strictly scientific

[15]Descamps, "La Nouvelle Vulgate," 602-603.

[16]ST as quoted in Descamps, "La Nouvelle Vulgate," 602-603.

> perspective, a precious privilege: it is a precise reflection of the original texts of the two Testaments.[17]

To the objection that persons who devote themselves to exegesis at the highest level cannot dispense with the study of Hebrew or Greek, Bishop Descamps answers: "That is evident." But he affirms that there is room for thinking also of that category of "Biblists" which is situated half-way between the specialists and the educated readers, and charged besides with popularizing the results of critical exegesis. For them, the Neo-Vulgate provides

> a faithful mirror of the original, while linking them, in addition, to an entire Christian tradition, therefore also to all the moral and dogmatic teaching which should remain at the basis of a Christian view of the world.[18]

Conclusion to Part II

The three indications given by ST, regarding the import of the Neo-Vulgate in the present situation, do not support the claim of LA that the Neo-Vulgate is "the point of reference as regards the delineation of the canonical text." Rather, the Neo-Vulgate is proposed as a 1) helpful "reference for translations in vernacular languages destined for liturgical and pastoral use," especially when translators know no Hebrew and Greek, and 2) foundation on which biblical studies may be based, "especially where specialized libraries are accessible only with great difficulty" and where "Biblists" do not know Hebrew or Greek. The Apostolic Constitution, as interpreted by Bishop Descamps, does not make the Neo-Vulgate an authority for all translators of the Bible for liturgical purposes.

[17]Descamps, "La Nouvelle Vulgate," 603.

[18]Descamps, "La Nouvelle Vulgate," 603.